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TRACKED BY BUSHRANGERS,

AND

OTHER STORIES,

TOGETHER WITH

WORK FOR THE MASTER,

A SERIES OF PAPERS FOR WOMEN.

BY

MRS. CHADS,

7801 (E.A.C.),

Author of "The Snowdrops' Message," "Tried as Pure Gold," etc.

'Life is, to do the will of God."
—*S. Wetherall*,

GEORGE ROBERTSON & COMPANY,

MELBOURNE AND SYDNEY.

1891.

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TO

THE MEMORY

OF

MY HUSBAND.

ELLEN AUGUSTA CHADS,

GLENFERRIE, OCTOBER, 1891.

PREFACE.

SOME years since I published a story called "Dora's Repentance," and, to my great surprise, I have recently learnt that a general impression exists that it was but the history of my own life, put forward under another name. I am, therefore, glad of the present opportunity of correcting the error.

Except for the facts that the character of Keith Grosvenor was taken from that of my husband—the described style of life in England such as I was accustomed to, and the incidents related in the chapter "Reminiscences of Indian Life," some that occurred to my husband, my brother and myself—the whole of the story was a mere creation of my own brain, and I am at a loss to understand how such a curious mistake could have arisen.

In the present volume, the sketch entitled "A Strange Sequel to a Ball," is literally true, only the names being altered.

ELLEN AUGUSTA CHADS.

Evans 3 Mar 1943

CONTENTS.

[illegible]
Hawthorn
Victoria

HUGH MACKENZIE'S QUESTION.

IT was a bitterly cold night, a true Christmas-Eve, for the snow lay deep on the ground, and the leafless trees appeared lit up with diamonds, as the strong, keen wind tossed them in the air, and the rays of the full moon fell on the icicles that hung from every branch.

Efford Park lay in one of the prettiest parts of Monmouthshire, and had been left to the present owner by his uncle, Colonel Murray, an old Indian officer, unmarried, and who had always intended to make his favorite nephew, Arthur, his heir. The latter was a widower with one daughter, Alison, a girl of eighteen, whose face looked too sad for her years, and in whose dark blue eyes was a wistful expression that told of some heavy grief shadowing the young life that, to all appearance, should have been so happy. She was seated, on the evening in question, near a glowing coal fire in a room from whose windows was an extended view of the Park, and in the summer it would have been difficult to have found a fairer landscape of the kind.

The curtains were as yet undrawn, and only the bright firelight illumined the room and the quiet figure watching the glancing flames, and recalling memories of the last Christmas Eve, when life had seemed so bright and hopeful. Tears fell fast and thick on the white hands that almost unconsciously

played with the holly and ivy lying in her lap, and bitter was her remorse as she thought of the grief her own wilfulness had brought upon herself and one who was still the dearest to her in this world.

About eighteen months previous to the time of which we write, the town of L— had been suddenly enlivened by the arrival of the 73rd regiment, and as Mr. Murray's house was only about eight miles distant, an intimacy was quickly formed with the Squire and his pretty daughter.

It was soon evident that Hugh Mackenzie, the senior Captain, found a special attraction there, and that the reserved grave young Scotchman never refused an invitation where he was likely to meet sweet Alison Murray. Before the summer had quite run its course, he had found that the one deep love of his heart was given to her, and though somewhat doubtful of how the wealthy Squire would regard such an alliance for his only child, he determined to speak to the girl on the first opportunity. His offer was accepted, and Mr. Murray, who liked him greatly for his many good qualities, gladly gave his consent, and life became in truth, "Love's young dream," to Hugh Mackenzie and his future wife. The year was drawing to a close, and the usual run of Christmas gaieties had commenced when the event happened which memory was so forcibly recalling to Alison Murray, by bringing back the few hot and hasty words the utterance of which had thus dimmed the sunshine of her life. Among the numerous invitations received by her at that time, had been one for New Year's Eve. It was a proposal from very intimate friends that she should join in some amateur theatricals to be held on that night at their house. To the girl's annoyance, Captain Mackenzie at once set his face against the scheme, and asked her to refuse. Like many of us, he thought such a time as the closing evening of the year too solemn a one to be passed in so heedless a manner, and he sought gently to win her over to his way of thinking.

But his loving arguments were all in vain, and Alison, who had lost her mother when quite a child, and, in consequence, had been somewhat spoiled by the Squire, angrily broke off her engagement, and took her share in the amusements which had cost her so heavy a price.

When the first flush of anger was past, she saw how she had ruined her own life, and would have gladly recalled her foolish words, but Captain Mackenzie gave no opening for a reconciliation, and day by day the sad look deepened on her face, and the wistful expression in the sweet eyes seemed to become habitual, until her father, haunted by an idea that she would follow in her mother's steps, and her life be ended ere it had well opened into the beauty of full womanhood, sold off his property in Warwickshire, and went abroad for some months, remaining there indeed until a few weeks previous to the commencement of our story, when he had come to Efford Park on the death of Colonel Murray. It was a beautiful place, and as Alison wandered through the grounds and admired the rich autumn trees, (then in their last glory), of the wide and varied landscape that met her gaze on every side, she thought sadly that if Hugh were but beside her, she could ask no greater earthly happiness, but, as we have said, the young officer made no sign that could be interpreted as wishing for a reconciliation, and about the middle of November, the 73rd were ordered to India, and when the news reached her (so it seemed to her sad heart,) the brightness of her life died out for ever in this world.

Dreaming over the past, she sat on, forgetting her share in the decorations of the church in honor of the Master's birthday, and still allowing the sprays of "Christmas-green" to lie unheeded in her lap.

A large party of girls from the neighboring houses was meantime approaching the grand old church, which, with its massive square tower, stood out in dark relief against its background of snow-covered fir-trees, and as the deep-toned clock rang out its seven strokes, the whole of the building became illuminated, and the tall, white-haired rector came forward through the ivy-covered porch to welcome his light-hearted assistants in the pleasant Christmas work. They were followed by other groups until about thirty were assembled. It was a pretty and truly English scene. Down the aisles and near the communion railings were great masses of evergreen, with long sprays of shining ivy and bunches of scarlet holly and orange-colored arbutus berries. On all sides were busy workers forming wreaths, garlands and suitable texts, and

the rector stood in the midst, watching with a smile the happy faces around him. "I remember," he at last said, "a similar gathering years ago, which had a rather ludicrous termination."

"What was it, papa?" Nellie Ainslie enquired, looking down at her father from the ladder where she stood wreathing the front of the organ.

"It happened when I was in Mauritius," was the reply; "it was a lovely Christmas-Eve, * and as there is no twilight there, all the decorations of the pretty little church, standing at the end of an avenue of mangoes, had to be completed during the afternoon. When finished, the effect was very good with the graceful arches up the aisle, the pretty wreathing of the communion-railings, bunches of some kind of yellow berries inserted here and there in lieu of our own bright holly, and the font filled with lovely variegated foliage and feathery grass; and the workers felt fully repaid for their labour, which had been sufficiently arduous in such warm weather. Leaving strict injunctions with the old Indian who was waiting to lock up the church, to let every window stand wide open as it was then, the party repaired to the house of a Government official who lived close by, and whose sister was one of the decorators. During the evening a sudden fear seized upon the young lady in question that their directions as to the open windows, had not been regarded, and she induced her friends to again visit the church.

"'Everything will be withered, and we shall have to do it all again,' remarked another lady, and anxious looks were exchanged, for there was no way of lighting the church, and the early morning French service for the Creoles and Indians was to be held by the Bishop at seven!

"Much to the astonishment of the old care-taker, he was roused up for the key, and on opening the door, a general exclamation of dismay was heard from the whole party. By some misunderstanding of the people employed to sweep out the church, every window had been carefully closed, and the beautiful decorations were already withered and fading, and promised to be utterly ruined before the morning. At first there seemed nothing to be done, owing to the lateness of the hour, but to give orders for the whole to be cleared away early the next morning, and to leave the building undecorated,

* This is a true incident.

but the English Christmas feeling was too strong in most hearts, and the young lady already mentioned (who was the most recent arrival from home) exclaimed,

"We will be here by three in the morning and re-decorate it, we shall have nearly four hours to work."

And right willingly was it done, though so closely were they run for time, that the last leaves were being taken away, as the early congregation began to enter.

"Of course the decorations had to be simpler, but I am not sure if they did not gain in beauty by that fact. At intervals along the walls were suspended great leaves of the fan-palm, from which hung masses of a rich scarlet blossom, and the font and railings were hidden in light trails of green and a lovely white lily peculiar to the island. Now I wonder how many of you would be up to-morrow at three to complete the decorations?" concluded the rector with a half-laugh.

"Consider the difference of climate," was the instant reply of a merry-looking brunette, Norah Graham by name.

Mr. Ainslie laid his hand fondly on the dark wavy hair. He had known the girl from a child, and loved her almost as well as he did his own daughter.

"Never at a loss for a reply, are you?" he said smilingly, as he went further down the row of busy workers who had been taking a brief rest during his story.

"Where can Alison Murray be?" enquired Norah as she took some needed evergreen from the boughs which Nellie Ainslie had just brought up to her.

"I do not know," was the quiet answer; "I wish we could rouse her into some interest for our village-work. She is sweet and kind to everyone, but my heart aches when I see that sad look in her eyes?"

"Do you think," Norah asked, "that there was any truth about her having been engaged before the Squire came here, and that she had had some misunderstanding with her *fiancé*?"

"There was such a report, I know," replied the Rector's daughter, "but I have not the least idea how it arose, and really, Norah, it strikes me that we are verging very closely on papa's special aversion—gossip—and not at all getting forward with the pulpit-wreath."

Her companion laughed, "I suppose you are right, Nellie, as you usually are, and that Alison's private affairs do not concern us."

And still in the quiet, fire-lit room, the girl of whom they were talking, sat lost in thought till the sudden entrance of the Squire and the ringing out of the flight of another hour, startled her from her reverie.

"Not gone yet, Allie?" Mr. Murray asked in a surprised tone, "you will be late, will you not, dear?"

"I am going now, papa," was the answer, and, with a loving kiss, she left the room.

Her father turned towards the still glowing fire and held out his hands to meet the pleasant warmth, but the red light fell on a serious look that sat but ill on the Squire's kindly face.

"Poor child!" he thought, "how she has wrecked her own happiness! And such a fine young fellow as Hugh was! I wonder what has become of the lad since he left the 73rd.? Alison does not know of that, I kept the paper out of her sight that day, and as no one of course mentions his name to her, she has never heard of the fact. I remember his telling me that his father had lately expressed a desire that he would settle down at home, as his own health was failing, and he wished Hugh to know something about the estate which the lad would inherit at his death. It is not very much of a place, I daresay, but Allie would have had enough to make that a matter of little consequence, and she would have obtained the very husband I could have desired for her. Ah, well, I wish the quarrel could be made up again, but I fear that is not likely to be, though the Master's birthday seems a meet and fitting time to forgive and forget."

A chorus of half-reproachful half-jesting young voices greeted Miss Murray as she came up to the porch of the church where the erst-while busy workers where all standing, previous to separating to prepare for a musical party, to be given that evening by the Vicar.

"Oh! Alison," was the general exclamation, "How late you are! Everything is done but the putting up of your text. Is it finished.?"

The girl thus addressed only smiled as she looked towards a large basket just set down in the church by the servant who had accompanied her. Eager hands soon lifted out the various letters, and her lovely floral work obtained her complete forgiveness for her tardy appearance.

"Do not wait," she said, turning to the group near her, "I am ready to go on to the vicarage as soon as my father comes for me, and Hardy will put up the text in a few minutes. He is used to the work."

Her suggestion was followed, and in another quarter of an hour Alison stood alone, waiting for Mr. Murray and the Vicar, the latter of whom was coming back to see the church closed for the night. Her eyes were fixed, almost unconsciously, upon her text, which, worked in Christmas roses, ivy and holly, was fastened above the communion-table, and involuntarily she uttered the words aloud, "Peace on earth, good-will to men." Ah, if it might but be 'peace' again between Hugh and myself! If I could but recall those hasty, cruel words I uttered last Christmas-time. If the dear Master would but let me see him once more, and tell him I never meant them in reality; but it is too late, and I can only pray to be able to bear my punishment patiently. If I only knew that he forgave me!"

"'Forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us.' Shall it indeed be 'peace' between us, Alison?" asked a voice near her, and turning hastily, she saw Hugh Mackenzie standing with out-stretched hands.

Laying her own in his, the girl strove to answer, but the words died away from excess of joy, though the sweet eyes told their own happy story, and as the young officer drew her within his sheltering arms, he whispered lovingly, "May the dear Master's birthday ever bring 'peace and good-will' into many hearts, my darling, but to none can it recall sweeter memories than it will henceforth do to you and me, for surely none will have greater cause than we now have, to bless and thank Him for this Christmas Eve. And Allie," he added, bending low his handsome head over the golden-haired one that rested so gladly on his shoulder, "I have forgiveness to ask too, my darling. I should not have allowed pride to get so much the better of me, as to prevent my seeking reconciliation,

Often and bitterly did I regret it, as hour by hour increased the distance between us, and long before we reached Calcutta, I had determined to write to you. But the day after I landed, I was attacked with sun-stroke, and I had barely recovered when letters came from my father, urging me, as he had done several times before, to throw up my profession and settle at home during his life-time. The dear old man is not so strong even as he was when I sailed for the East, and greatly as I loved my profession (and it was a real grief to resign all my hopes of promotion), I am now glad I yielded to his request. My mother tells me it was absolutely painful to note his anxiety as the time drew near for him to receive my answer from India. Besides the giving him pleasure, I had one other gleam of sunshine. Can you guess what it was, dear?" he continued with a loving smile, as the violet eyes fell before his gaze, and the fair face became flushed up to the masses of golden hair which his hand seemed never weary of caressing.

"I thought there might perhaps be a hope that you had not forgotten me, and that the past happy days might once more be renewed. Is it to be so, dear? shall we both forgive and forget, and, with the Master's blessing, let our future be one for time and for eternity?"

Alison Murray looked up in the face that had never seemed so dear to her as in that moment.

"I do not think you have much need to ask forgiveness, Hugh, I was to blame from first to last. It was scarcely probable you would care to seek for a reconciliation with one who spoke so cruelly and unjustly as I did last Christmas-Eve. I will try my best to make up to you for all the sorrow my wilful temper caused you. I have thought so often of that miserable evening."

Her voice broke as Captain Mackenzie drew her closer to him, and bade her forget all that sad past with all their mutual faults, and think with him of the happiness that had so suddenly come upon them.

"I only returned," he went on, "about a fortnight ago," and ran down to L—, (the 22nd are stationed there now) last Tuesday. Scoresby, (the adjutant) and I are old friends of many years' standing, and it was from him I learnt of your having been abroad and finally settled down here. I stayed

with him till this morning, as I wanted, if possible, to meet you again almost at the very hour we parted from one another. I had given the man orders to drive to the Park, but as we were passing the Vicarage, he half drew-up to tell me that "the Squire" had just entered in there with the Vicar and some other people, and that "the young lady" had gone in to the Church which was being decorated for the season. I could not resist the longing to get even a glimpse of you, though I did not intend to come in, believing you would be with friends, and I did not care to meet you again for the first time before strangers. You see I was not quite certain of what my reception would be!"

Alison laughed—the happy light-hearted sound that the poor Squire began to think he should never again hear from her lips.

"You need not have been afraid," she half-shyly whispered, as Captain Mackenzie bent down to press a long-lingering kiss on the sweet red lips, "you have been in my thoughts all the day."

The young officer smoothed back the sunny hair from the face that was again half-hidden on his shoulder.

"Then you can imagine how glad I was at seeing you were alone. I watched you for a minute, and then—darling—you know the rest!"

"Thank God, yes," was the earnest reply, and Hugh Mackenzie re-echoed the words in his heart as he turned at the sound of a footstep in the porch, and found himself welcomed by the Squire who was just entering with Mr. Ainslie.

"Mackenzie, my dear lad! can it really be you? We only needed your arrival to make our Christmas all I could wish it to be. Ainslie, this is Hugh Mackenzie, who is dear to me as my own son."

The Vicar bowed, and glancing from the radiant face of the Squire to that of his daughter, sparkling with happiness, though the quivering of the pretty lips told that the "unshed tears" were very near the violet eyes, he thought it needed no great exercise of imagination to guess *why* the stranger ranked so high in Mr. Murray's estimation.

And he felt still more certain when, a month later, a bridal-party in which Hugh and Alison were the principal characters, whilst Nellie Ainslie and Norah Graham were bridesmaids and Captain Scoresby best-man, came up the aisle of the freshly-decorated church, and stood before him as he waited with open book within the communion-railings to bind together in God's name, "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, until death did them part," the two who at one time, through their own impetuosity, had seemed so likely to be parted for ever in this world.

FLORAL LEGENDS.

"In all places then, and in all seasons,
Flowers expand their light and soul-like wings."

The following legends have been collected by me at various times. Some are translations, and others I have heard, read and obtained in different ways during my travels. I do not think they are very generally known. I have of course, worked most out in fuller detail than I myself had them.

E.A.C

THE FORGET-ME-NOT.

A PERSIAN LEGEND.

"The sweet Forget-me-not,
That grows for happy lovers."

LONG ages ago, "in the golden morning of the early world," an Angel stood before the entrance into Paradise, but there was no joy in his attitude. His wings hung drooping to the ground, and bitter tears fell fast from his eyes, whilst the beauty of his face was shadowed by deep sorrow and remorse, for "the gates of pearl" were closed against him, and the edict which had gone forth seemed to have shut him out for ever from the beautiful home that he so dearly loved. And yet, even as he mourned, he acknowledged the justice of his sentence, for he knew that he had betrayed his trust.

On one of his errands to earth, he had seen a girl seated on the banks of a river, twining in her golden hair, sprays of a small blue flower that grew luxuriantly around the spot. The Angel's love went out to her, and his high mission was neglected for the sake of her wonderful beauty, and in displeasure at his disobedience, the gates were closed against him until they both had sown the lovely blossom in every part of the world. With a sad heart he returned to the girl and told of the punishment that awaited him, but her love made light of the imposed task. Hand in hand they wandered through the earth, and wherever the Angel and the golden-haired girl stooped down, they left the "sweet forget-me-not" as a token of their obedience and regret for the past.

Long did they roam through country after country, leaving each the fairer for their visit, and then—their task completed, their punishment over—the pearly gates opened once more to let them both pass through, for Immortality without Death was given to the girl whose love had proved so faithful.

THE RED ROSE.

A ROUMANIAN LEGEND.

IN a beautiful "castle near the sea" there lived a princess, whose fair face was the theme of many a song. Around the castle was a large garden filled with a wealth of flowers, and beyond it lay the great blue ocean. The princess dearly loved the sea, and one morning saw her bathing in its waters, warm and golden from the beams of the rising sun. The "God of Day" looked down upon her wonderful beauty, and it seemed to him as though earth could hold nothing lovelier. He watched her arise from the murmuring waters and pass through the garden with its fragrant perfumes and gorgeous blossoms; he saw her enter the castle and become lost to view; but still he rested in his place and forgot his high mission of lighting the

whole earth. Three days passed by, and yet the sun moved not, but remained watching the Princess as she went to and fro. The world mourned and faded under his cold neglect, but he heeded not its pain and sorrow, for he was unconscious of aught but the beauty which bound him as in a spell.

On the third day the Lord of the Universe arose in wrath at the destruction and misery brought on by the Day-god's infatuation. He bent his gaze upon the Princess who was just entering the garden, and bade her remain in it under the form of a rose, and immediately, where the fair girl had stood, there appeared a rose-tree, bearing an exquisite crimson blossom that hung its head abashed when the sun turned his parting glance upon her, ere he started on his long-forgotten mission.

And since that day, the red rose droops in soft languor as the warm beams of the God of Day fall directly upon her.

Another legend gives a different version of this rose. When the God of Love was one day playing amongst his friends, he seized a flask of nectar and flung it down in jest. A beautiful white rose was growing near the spot and some of the liquid fell upon its blossoms. In an instant the snowy hue was gone, for Cupid's involuntary gift had "made it for ever red."

THE WHITE JESSAMINE.

IT is said that before our Master laid down His life in atonement for the sins of all who trust in Him, the jessamine bore flowers of an exquisite rose-pink hue, and that its beauty was the theme of general admiration. But the grateful plant cared little for the adulation bestowed so freely upon it, and only rejoiced in its beauty because of the Great Giver. Day by day it held up its graceful sprays as the Master passed by, in expectation of the loving smile that ever greeted the fragrant, rosy blooms.

But the day came when the longed-for steps were not heard, and the kind glance not bestowed, and with trembling dread

and sorrow unspeakable, the jessamine became aware of what was happening on Calvary's hill, and as the woeful news of the greatest tragedy which the world ever saw became realized by it, the lovely pink faded till only snow-white blossoms met the view of the astonished passers-by.

And from that hour, says the legend, the jessamine has mourned, and shown her love for her Divine Maker by blooming, year after year, solely in white.

II.
A TUSCAN LEGEND.

MANY years ago there lived in Tuscany a betrothed couple whose mutual poverty seemed likely to prevent their marriage ever taking place. After vain efforts to improve his lot, the young man determined to leave his native place for a time and see if he could so earn money, but though he wandered far away, he became no richer. At last he found himself in the East, and whilst there a friend gave him a spray of Jessamine. Struck with the beauty of its flower and foliage, he determined to try and take it back with him to Tuscany, for he was about to return home, but unfortunately no richer than when he started!

To his great delight, the slip flourished and became a beautiful plant, admired by all whose avocations took them near the place where he lived. Many offers were made him to sell the Jessamine but he would not part with his favorite, which was looked upon then as something not only beautiful, but rare.

At last, the repeated proposals to sell it, suggested a passing idea to the young man.

Instead of disposing of the plant, he begun to cut bouquets from it, which he sold at a high price to all who required them. The fame of the sweet-scented flower grew daily, and ere-long, so many requests were made for it, that he became rich enough to marry and take his bride to a comfortable home whose garden has, as its chief and most valued ornament, the once small spray cut off in that far off Eastern land. And ever since that time, it is said that Tuscan brides carry a bouquet of Jessamine upon their wedding-day.

THE FIR TREE.

A NORWEGIAN LEGEND.

A miner with his wife and family once lived close by the Hubinchenstein, one of the Hartz mouutains. This hill had a great deal of mystery belonging to it, and the firs, with which it was thickly covered, were considered as almost sacred. The poor miner was one day taken ill, and before long the whole family were on the verge of starvation. Unable to see her dear ones suffering from want, the wife resolved to brave the supposed dangers of the forest, and telling her husband of her intention, she started one day for the purpose of gathering cones and selling them in the neighboring market. She had not long entered the deep shadow cast by the wide-spreading trees when she was met by a strange-looking, quaintly-attired man, aged and short of stature, with a flowing white beard, who seeing her evident grief, stopped and asked the reason of it.

"My husband is very ill, and my little ones are starving," was her reply, "and I am come in much fear to gather cones in this haunted place."

The old man smiled at her terror. "Have no fear," he said kindly, "but pick up as many of the largest as you can find, and go home."

Wondering who the speaker could be, she went on her way, and began gathering the cones lying about, but to her astonishment, a shower of immense ones fell at her feet, thrown down by unseen hands, for no breath of air stirred the branches of the great firs. Terribly frightened, she collected a number hurriedly, and set off to run home, but she soon had to stop and rest, as, much to her surprise, the cones appeared every moment to be growing heavier. On looking into her basket to learn the cause, she beheld, instead of the brown cones she had just thrown in, an equal amount of pure silver ones.

Overjoyed at the sight, she forgot her fatigue, and hastened back to her husband, who at once guessed that the old man could have been none other than Gübich, the King of the Dwarfs, said to haunt the Hubinchenstein, and of kindly disposition where he took a liking to some favored mortal.

He advised his wife to return the next day to the forest in hopes of again meeting her benefactor. She did so, and the Dwarf once more accosted her and gave her a bundle of plants to be used by her husband. The present was thankfully received, and proved the means of restoring the poor man to health. The silver cones were melted down, and laid the foundation of great wealth, for which the miner in time became renowned.

The legend goes on to state that one of the Dwarf's gifts was preserved in memory of him, and may be seen in Gründ as a mute witness of the truth of the transaction.

THE SNOWDROP.

AN EASTERN LEGEND.

IT is said that when our first parents were commanded to leave their beautiful home, and the Angel, with his flaming sword, stood at the entrance gate to guard "the way of the tree of life," that the very elements seemed to pour out their wrath upon those who had brought sorrow and death into God's beautiful world.

Snow fell thick and fast, and the keen wind struck like a knife into the shivering frames of Adam and Eve as they paused for one last wistful, longing gaze upon the peace, beauty, and happiness of the scene from which their own mad ingratitude had caused their exile.

Silently the Angel watched them, as in mute sorow their eyes rested on the loved home, then, touched by the despair in Eve's face as she turned to leave, he bent down and raised from the ground a freshly-fallen snow-flake, which he placed in her trembling hand.

"Take it," he gently said, "let it be to you as a remembrance of the garden of Eden."

As he spoke, the snow-flake was changed into an exquisite white flower tinged with the palest green, and with a look of thankfulness at the kind giver, Eve passed away to work out her own portion of the curse, her tears of vain regret falling on the fragile blossom which men have ever since called the "Snow-drop."

THE WHEAT.

A DANISH LEGEND.

SOME hundred years ago there was such a dry season in Sjorlland, that no corn could be ground, nor could the water-mills have worked for the purpose of grinding the wheat even had it been supplied to them.

A farmer during this drought was one day walking through his formerly fruitful fields, and marking the difference with a sad heart and dejected mien. Suddenly he heard a voice speaking to him, and asking what caused his great sorrow.

The farmer raised his eyes, and to his surprise, saw before him a strange-looking little man, a dwarf, or Dvœrg, covered with hair and carrying an up-rooted tree in one hand, who repeated his question in a kindly manner.

"It is of no use to trouble you about it," said the farmer, in a despairing voice, "You cannot help me or alter the distress that reigns throughout the whole country."

"You want water to make the corn grow and your mills to turn," said the Dvœrg; "well, have faith in me—do as I bid you—and all will go right. Now, follow me, and I will show you what to do."

Greatly bewildered at this speech, the farmer followed his curious guide, who showed him a spot on his land where seven corn-mills were to be built.

"They will never lack water," said the Dwarf, as he went away, "and so long as you continue to guard this little white horn which I now give you, so long will success follow you and your family."

The advice was carried out in every respect, and the farmer soon became a wealthy man, and though the Dvœrg never repeated his visit, his memory was held very dear by those to whom he had been so kind a friend in their hour of need.

THE CROWN IMPERIAL.

TRADITION tells us that when the shores of Galilee knew the sound of the Master's step, all creation, saving man alone, bowed in homage before Him. Wherever He passed, the flowers bent their sweet heads in acknowledgement of His power, till one day a lily in her new-born beauty, refused to do so. Whilst every other blossom around her drooped in love and awe, she raised her crowned head, regal as that of any Empress, and looked upwards as though unconscious of Who stood before her.

Silent and grave, the Master's eyes rested upon her, and unable to bear the loving reproof, the beautiful flower blushed till every snowy petal became of a rosy tinge, and tears of shame bedewed them.

And ever since that day, so says the legend, the Crown Imperial hangs her head with never-ceasing tears and blushes, for grief at the recollection of her hour of boastful pride.

THE ALMOND TREE.

IN the long-ago ages there lived a deserted wife who bore her heavy burden of sorrow and loneliness without one murmuring word. But as day after day passed on, and no tidings came to her from the one who had promised to be her earthly shield and stay, her beauty faded, and she at last died, broken-hearted for the want of the love that had once been so entirely her own.

At the moment of death, she was changed into an almond-tree, and when, after some further months of reckless wandering, the husband returned to his former happy home, he was shown the place where it had been planted.

In a passion of grief and remorse, he bent down before it in unavailing regret and earnest prayers that his past cruelty

might be forgiven. Suddenly, as he raised his tear-dimmed eyes, the leafless branches above him became almost hidden as with a veil of faintest pink, and with joy unutterable, he knew that his prayers were answered, and that the exquisite blossoms were the visible token of his injured wife's forgiveness.

And ever since, (so runs the legend) the flowers of the almond-tree come before its leaves.

THE ASPEN.

A SYRIAN LEGEND.

"Far off in Highland wilds 'tis said
That of this tree the Cross was made,
And of that deed its leaves confess.
E'er since, a troubled consciousness."

IT is said that when that awful mockery of a trial was concluded at Jerusalem, and the Saviour of the world condemned to die upon the Cross, that the Aspen was chosen as the tree most fitting for the purpose. But when the decree went forth for it to supply the wood that was to bear the form of its Creator during those hours of unspeakable woe and pain, a shuddering horror took possession of its graceful branches, and every leaf shook as though an ague-wind had passed over it.

No resistance could be offered, but the tree trembled at the thought, and left as a legacy to every succeeding Aspen, the quivering agitation that shame and grief had brought upon it when, from amongst all the trees that grew, it alone was selected to be the instrument of the Master's agony and death, and so—

"When not a breeze is stirring,
When the mist sleeps on the hill,
And all other trees are moveless,
Stands the Aspen quivering still."

THE RADISH.

A FRENCH LEGEND.

A Mountain Genie once fell in love with a beautiful Princess, whose husband was absent on a journey. Having made her his captive, he was much troubled to find her grief inconsolable, and on one of his daily visits, he learnt that she was pining greatly for the lost companions of her former home. He accordingly brought on the next occasion of seeing her, a bunch of radishes and a magic rod, presenting them with these words, "When you are lonely, touch each radish with the wand, and your desire will be fulfilled."

Charmed with the thought that her solitude would now be at an end, she at once used the latter, and to her delight, was soon surrounded by a group of girls as young, and almost as lovely as herself. But her joy was of but short duration, for as the radishes withered away, so did her companions droop and die.

"Do not leave me," the Princess exclaimed in bitter sorrow, "just as I have learnt to love you."

"Fain would we stay, sweet lady," they replied, "but our lives are united with those fading roots, and as they die, so also must we," and even as they spoke, they sank down one by one and expired.

When next the Genie paid his dreaded visit, he was told of the maidens' fate, and bringing another bunch of radishes, he bade his prisoner console herself with new companions. The Princess however, was now determined to try and escape, and resolved to use her magic rod for a different purpose. Touching one of the bunch, she commanded it to change into a bee and fly to her husband, beseeching him to come to her rescue. The insect rose into the air, and after circling round and round, vanished from her sight. But no help came to the poor captive, for the faithless messenger, lured by the sight and scent of the lovely flowers on every side, forgot his errand and wandered far away. Again the wand was applied, and this time a cricket arose from under the spell, and was despatched with equal want of success.

Though weary and disappointed, the lady made one more attempt, and a grasshopper was the chosen envoy.

"Tell the Prince that I am kept here a prisoner against my will," she said, "and entreat him to come to my rescue, or I shall die of despair."

"I go, fair Princess," was the answer, "keep up a brave heart, for I shall soon return with aid." But the cheery words brought little hope to the poor prisoner, for had not the other messengers said the same and yet deceived her?

Some days passed and she was again giving way to despair, when the voice of the grasshopper was heard, and in another instant her husband and his faithful little guide were beside her. Just at that moment the Genie was seen approaching, and the strangers had to hide themselves. To occupy his attention, and in pursuance of her plan of escape, the Princess bade him count the remaining radishes, and whilst so engaged, she touched one of the latter and changed it into a swift horse, upon which she and her husband escaped to their home, leaving the Genie distracted at his loss.

THE IRIS, OR FLEUR-DE-LIS.

AN ENGLISH LEGEND.

IN the long-past days when knights used to wander through the world, seeking to redress wrongs and injuries, there lived one who, though brave and devout, had yet but little learning. His great sorrow was that he, for that reason, could not learn or commit to memory, the Latin prayer which he was taught to believe he should offer to the Virgin; there were only two words which ever became familiar to him, and these he repeated with a fervour and constancy for which he at last became renowned.

His cry of "Ave Maria" might be heard at all hours of the night and day, and as the strong frame grew weary, and old age crept on apace, the knight's zeal and devotion only increased. When at last he died, the monks of the neigh-

bouring convent buried him in their own grave-yard, and to their astonishment, a lovely Fleur-de-lis sprang up from the spot where they had laid him, bearing numerous blossoms, and each inscribed in golden letters with the words the old man had so loved to utter!

The proud monks, whose learning and wealth had caused them to look down with scorn on the illiterate but devoted knight, could not understand why this strange sight should occur, and opened the grave, to find that the roots of the magical plant rested on the lips that had so constantly and fervently pronounced the only prayer their owner knew! Humbled and mortified, they left the spot to ponder on the lesson thus silently taught them.

II.

"What flower is that which royal honour craves?"

In the reign of Clovis I. of France, the royal device was the ugly one of three black toads, which seemed likely to become the permanent and acknowledged one of the nation. A change, however, was to take place, and the chosen messenger to announce the fact was a very aged man, a hermit of Joye-en-Valle. As he lay one night in his cell, the darkness was suddenly illumined by a marvellous light which entirely filled it. As soon as his dazzled gaze was able to rest steadily on it, he noticed an angel standing in the cell with a shield of great beauty in his out-stretched hand. The hermit looked in wonder at it with its three golden lilies, emblazoned on an azure ground, but did not venture to touch it until the angel bade him take and present it to Clothilde, his monarch's wife. As he finished speaking, he vanished from the cell, leaving the hermit again in darkness, musing on the strange vision. Shortly after, the Queen entered, and the old man at once laid the gift at her feet, acquainting her at the same time with the angel's message. Greatly delighted, the former hastened to her husband with the beautiful shield, which Clovis at once adopted; success everywhere attending his arms, and from that time forward, according to the legend, France accepted as her royal device the golden Fleur-de-Lys.

THE PRIMROSE.

A GERMAN LEGEND.

"Everywhere about us they are glowing,
To tell us—Spring is born."

THE trees and flowers were awakening from their long winter's sleep, and Nature was wearing her fairest garb, when a young man wandered down a forest-glade and, charmed with the beauty of the scene, stopped to rest awhile. Just as he did so, a woman, whom he knew by her great beauty to be the goddess, Bertha suddenly came in sight, and induced him to follow her by showing a large bunch of the Schlüsselblume, or Key-flower, as the primrose is called in Germany. After walking for some time, they emerged from the forest and stopped before a Castle, where complete silence reigned, which showed that it was under the influence of enchantment.

Bertha, still without speaking, moved to a great door, overgrown and almost hidden by creeping plants in blossom. Raising her hand, she knocked lightly with the primroses, and it opened immediately into a room containing vessels of gold and silver, each filled with treasures of immense value, but covered with the protecting "Key-flowers." On a signal from his guide, the young man displaced them, and after taking as much as he could from the jars, was about to depart, when his steps were arrested by the sound of a voice saying, "Forget not that the flowers must be restored, or thou wilt for ever be followed by a large black dog." This legend is also, in some parts of Germany, attributed to the Forget-me-not.

THE MOSS-ROSE.

A GERMAN LEGEND.

"And the green moss gather'd around the stem,
While the dew-drops shone like a diadem,
Crowning the blushing flower."

MANY years ago, an angel was sent down to earth, commissioned to do a work of love and mercy.

Whilst on this errand, he was to assume the form of a human being, so that none should know from whence he came.

The sins and sorrows of mankind grieved and dismayed him, but he went lovingly on his way, striving to sow the seeds of peace and joy amongst the wretched people whom he met. Night with her mantle of soft and tender darkness covered the land, and the angel, tired and sad with his day's work, sought for shelter till the morning light; but not one amongst the children of men would admit the unknown "messenger of love," and with an aching heart and dejected look, he sat down beneath a beautiful rose-bush, whose thick branches protected him from the evening dew, whilst the sweet perfume of its blossoms gradually soothed him into a refreshing slumber.

The warmth of the morning sun aroused the angel, and remembering how different had been the treatment he had received from the rose-tree from that of those whom he had been seeking to benefit, he turned to it with a smile, and said:—

"Because you have yielded me the shelter which man, in his vain conceit, refused last night, I will leave behind me a proof of my love that, in its turn, shall contribute to your own comfort."

As he spoke, the beautiful rose felt its blossoms softly enclosed in sprays of tenderest moss, that guarded them from injury whilst greatly enhancing their loveliness; but when the grateful flower raised its head to thank its benefactor, it found that it was alone, for the angel had completed his errand of mercy, and returned to his own bright home!

THE RUSH.

AN IRISH LEGEND.

LONG ages past, when the Emerald Isle was visited by its patron saint, a chief living in fair Killarney, gave great offence to the former, who ordered the delinquent and all the neighboring potentates to come before him on a certain day. When all were assembled, St. Patrick spoke to the offender, and in his wrath was about to pronounce a heavy curse against him. Alarmed at this, both the chief and his friends began to implore for pardon, and the Saint, touched by their sorrow and fear, stopped in his anathema just as he had pronounced the words, "I curse."

"What *shall* I curse if not him?" he enquired, looking on the frightened people around him; and as with one voice, they exclaimed "The rushes and the Dinan," alluding to the small stream that ran beside them.

The Saint lifted up one hand, and turning away from the chief who had so displeased him, he said, "I curse the tops of the rushes and the red stones of the Dinan!" and ever since that hour, the peasantry say that the stream overflows suddenly and from no apparent cause, and that no rush is ever to be seen, whose top is not withered by reason of St. Patrick's curse.

THE TULIPS.

A DEVONSHIRE LEGEND.

"Which, struck together by the silken wind,
Rang their 'wildering chimes to vagrant butterflies."

ONCE upon a time, in the "good old days" when pixies and fairies used to haunt the earth, a great number of the former lived in a field near which stood a cottage, inhabited by an old woman, and surrounded by a garden.

Amongst the flowers which grew there in abundance, were some tulips, so rich and varied in their colors that the pixies became attracted to the spot, and determined to convert it into an elfin nursery. With this intention they carried their babies there, and lulled them to slumber amidst the lovely blossoms, and the sweet strains of their music, often heard at midnight and in the still evening air, caused the people round to declare that the tulips were enchanted, and that they themselves were the wonderful musicians from whose gay chalices were evoked those strangely witching sounds. In truth, such flowers had been never seen, for in their delight at the beauty of their nursery, the pixies resolved to give them fragrance—the one thing they required—and ere long the bed of tulips became as perfumed as though it had been one of roses.

The delight of the old woman may be imagined, and so fond did she become of them that not one was allowed to be picked.

Time passed on, and death at last claimed the owner of the enchanted flowers. The man who succeeded to her little property thought more of the useful than the beautiful, and threw away the tulips to make room for a bed of parsley. The affront offered to their favorite resort greatly annoyed the pixies, who at once caused an evil influence to pass over and wither the roots, and so affected the atmosphere that for many years after, the victim of their anger could not grow anything in his garden.

But though they thus marked the loss of their dearly-loved tulips, the "little people" never forgot the kindness shown to them by the old woman, and her grave received their tenderest care. Not a weed was ever seen upon it, but only a succession of the loveliest flowers planted by no mortal hands, and music as sweet, though more solemn, than that of former days might be heard around it, as the pixies carried out their work of love. This continued until the form beneath was considered to have passed away to dust, and then the unseen tenders of the spot departed, never again to return to it.

THE OAK.

A DANISH LEGEND.

ONE of the numerous cliffs on the Danish coast, Steon's Klint, was once upon a time the home of an Elle Konge or King of the Elves, but he frequently liked a more inland residence, and for that purpose chose a small hole in the wall of a neighbouring church, which soon was known as "Elle Kongen's Kammer," or the Chamber of the King of the Elves. Not far off were a number of oak-trees which had once been part of a great forest that had been cut down at different times till only these few remained. They were strange, gaunt, weather-beaten looking trees, and many a tale was whispered as to why they wore so curious an appearance.

But the King of the Elves knew all about the reason; and, as he sat in his little chamber, often laughed as he heard the peasants wondering about it as they went through the forest. For the Ellè Konge was aware that the oaks looked very different at night to what they did in the day-time, when the little children came to play and pick up acorns beneath their great straggling branches. When the sun had gone down and all was silent in the forest, the King knew that the trees were no longer to be seen, but that in their place stood so many brave soldiers, ready to obey his orders! Many were the battles that they had fought for him, often with the Cliff-king who lived some miles away, and who had a very beautiful queen; but as soon as the first gleam of light was to be seen, they had to hurry back to their wood, and resume their appearance of oak-trees until the evening once again broke the spell which bound them. The vicinity of the church to the spot where his soldiers stood disguised all day, was perhaps one reason why the Elf-King loved his little Kammer, or the strange history and fate of the monk, who, in his eagerness to build a church, disobeyed the wishes of his master, and was put to death for so doing, may have attracted him. For some motive, however, he liked the neighbourhood, and could the peasants have seen the forests on dark nights, they would

have witnessed strange scenes when the Elle Konge and his "tree-soldiers" were setting off to fight; but instead of going out, they would gather closer round the fire, and talk in frightened voices, afraid lest the Elf-king should hear and punish them.

THE FLAX.

NORTH GERMAN LEGENDS.

"Blue were her eyes as the fairy flax."

IN the days when dwarfs and gnomes were the friends of man, there lived a poor girl who had only her golden hair and her blue eyes for her riches. She was sitting one bright morning at her door, busy as usual with her spinning, when a dwarf suddenly appeared and put a distaff of flax into her hands, saying, "You have there enough to last you for the whole course of your life if you only take the precaution to never quite spin what I have given you entirely away."

Overjoyed at such a happy prospect, the girl promised to obey the injunction, and the dwarf disappeared as abruptly as he had come upon the scene. She soon grew rich for her station in life, and famed for her beautiful linen. Every year beheld her becoming more prosperous, for she was careful to remember the advice of her strange benefactor. But by degrees she began to wonder whether his words would be really true, and if any disaster would befall her should she spin off all the flax. She commenced to question whether there was anything beneath the latter, which had never yet failed her, and at last, one fatal day, she yielded to her curiosity, and disobeyed the dwarf's command. Nothing was to be seen but the wood of which the distaff was made! Vexed with herself and disappointed at her non-success, she again began to work, but she had seriously offended her good friend, and found to her dismay, that she must now labor like

those around her, for the magic properties of the distaff were all gone, and it was only an ordinary one such as she had before always used.

Bitterly did she bewail her disobedience, but the dwarf turned a deaf ear to her entreaties and never again visited her house.

II

AS a man was returning home one summer evening, he noticed on the side of the mountain he was ascending, the figure of a woman busily engaged in stripping off the capsules of a large pile of flax that lay heaped up before her. On getting nearer, he saw that it was the Frau Hülle, a well-known personage in German legends.

"Good evening, Frau Hülle," the man said as he passed by her.

"Good-night," was the reply, "you can take home a few of these capsules with you if you like."

Unwilling to offend one whom he knew to be so powerful, he thanked her courteously, but added that he already had a sufficient number of them.

"As you will," returned the Frau, and the traveller went on his way. After he had gone a short distance, he felt a constant pain in his foot, and on drawing off his shoe, found that it arose from some large capsules which had fallen into it from the Frau's lap, and since then changed into pure gold ones. He at once understood the reason of her kind offer, and returned home, blaming himself for having allowed so truly "golden" an opportunity to pass neglected.

THE DAISY.

A CELTIC LEGEND.

"Oh daisy, flower of the new-born babe."

IT is said that when Malvina lost her infant son, her despair was so great that the virgins of Morven went to console her, saying that they had seen a light mist that filled the air, and that as it opened, the baby was disclosed, surrounded by lovely

flowers, and that choosing one kind in particular, it scattered a great number over the fields above which it floated. Hastening to the spot, they raised the blossoms, and found the golden disc encircled by silvery-hued petals. Never had so fair a one been seen in their land, and they knew that it was the "unknown flower" which the spirit of the baby had been commissioned to throw down to cheer the gaze of the sorrowing mother; and with loving hands and glad hearts they carried the gift of the little one to its parent, and bade her be consoled, for they had seen her lost one happy and content.

And so the Daisy is known in Wales as the "Flower of the new-born," and is thought to be the message of the baby to the parents who mourn its departure from their loving arms.

THE ROSY SAINFOIN.

ALTHOUGH the "Angel's Hymn" had been sung on earth, and "Glory to God in the highest; peace, goodwill to men," resounded in the ears of the wandering shepherds, no palace-doors had opened wide to welcome the Babe Whose Advent had been so gloriously announced to those He came to save.

Calm and serene, with a beauty not of this world, He still lay in the rude manger, surrounded by the true inmates of the stable, and with His pillow formed of dry grass and flowers.

Amidst the latter was some Rosy Sainfoin, which, rising from the other blossoms, lovingly entwined itself around the little head, as though in mute homage to its Maker. And as the wreath was completed, the natural colors returned to the withered leaves and flowers until it seemed as though a freshly-gathered chaplet encircled the brow of the infant Saviour.

THE MOUNTAIN ASH.

A DANISH LEGEND.

"Rowan-tree and red thread
Put the witches to their speed."

LONG ages ago, when vessels were often lost on the coast of Zutland, it so happened that none had been for some time wrecked on a particular part of the western shore, and the Havman or "Merman" who dwelt there became at last weary of finding no victim to his wiles. At length he resolved to go on land and secure some cattle in default of better prey. Seeing some cows feeding on a sand-hill, he managed to throw a hook at them and dragged them after him to his watery home. Not far from the spot lived a Bonde or farmer, who owned two valuable red yearlings. Not wishing them to suffer the same fate as the cows, he fastened them together with twigs of Mountain Ash—knowing they would then be safe from the Havman's spells. Emboldened by his success, the Merman again went on shore and endeavoured to ensnare the yearlings, but the hook was caught by the rowan-twigs, and carried home by the farmer's cattle. Greatly delighted at the potency of the charm, the Bonde hung the hook up in triumph above his chimney-piece, where it remained for some time. After a few months, during which all the cattle in the neighbourhood had been in perfect safety, the farmer's wife was one day surprised by a visit from the Havman—he was short and of fair complexion, with a long beard of pale green hue. He looked sad and worried, and said he came "to beg the return of his hook, for since the yearlings had carried it away, he had made no captures of any kind. The rowan-twigs proved too strong for me," he added, "I never failed before to catch what I wished."

Afraid of angering him by a refusal, the woman gave back the hook, but the fear of the Mountain-Ash drove the Havman away and he was never seen or heard of again on that part of the coast.

THE COWSLIP.

AN ENGLISH (LINCOLNSHIRE) LEGEND.

"In their gold coats spots you see,
Those be rubies—fairy favours."

WHEN the "good people" used to dance nightly round their "fairy-rings," there was one flower they dearly loved, and to which, if a sudden shower of rain overtook them in their pastimes, they would always hurry for shelter. It was the cowslip, "the fairest herald of the spring."

Those who passed by on a summer's evening, when light showers fell from the clouds that for a few moments obscured the soft rays of the moon, would pause in wonder before the tufts of cowslips and listen to the sweet music that came from the lovely, drooping bells, each "with its five small drops of red," which were the "rubies, fairy favours" of the elves hidden inside them, safe from the gentle rain. They knew not that the fairies were singing and playing in honour of their favorite flower, and that bright eyes were watching the bold mortals who had wandered, uninvited, into their special haunts. Neither were they aware that on May-Day, though the elves could rest on, and hide in every other flower that blossomed at that time, they were not allowed to visit their "fairy-cups" which Queen Mab so loved that they were known to be "her pensioners," and to which she had given the power of restoring and retaining beauty for the mortal who had lost it, and who sought the cowslips for the purpose of once more possessing it.

And so, whenever the rain and dew-drops fall and gem the earth with diamonds, and the light clouds flit across the silvery moon, and other blossoms have closed their petals in quiet sleep, the melodies of Fairy-land ring out from the clustering bells of the gold and crimson cowslips.

THE AMBROSIA.

A CHINESE LEGEND.

"Food fit for Gods."

A certain Emperor of the Flowery Land was one day walking on a hillside near his palace, when he saw two women, one of great age, the other in the first bloom of girlhood. The latter, to his extreme astonishment, was beating her companion most cruelly. Shocked at such unnatural conduct, he demanded an explanation of it, and learnt that the young-looking woman was, in reality, the mother of the other one, and that her girlish appearance was to be accounted for by the fact that she had eaten of a plant which changed mortals into fairies or genii possessing immortal youth.

On hearing this, the Monarch at once enquired for information by which he could find this wonderful plant, and having obtained it, he despatched in search of it, a messenger in whom he had every confidence, telling him that though many and severe difficulties lay in the way, his reward should be proportionably great if he succeeded in bringing some Ambrosia back with him.

After a long journey, the servant arrived at the desired spot, and found a high hill covered with the flower; he lost no time in collecting a good supply, but on rising the next morning he found it much withered, and unfit to carry to the Emperor.

Unwilling to lose so wonderful a plant, faded though it were, the man determined to try its magical powers upon himself, and ate it. He then started for some more, but on reaching the hill discovered, to his consternation, that the Ambrosia, which had been so plentiful the preceeding day, had all disappeared, save one small plant, which he could see growing far down the side of a dangerous precipice. All present were appalled at the sight, and refused to risk

their lives in the endeavour to obtain the flower—all save the messenger—who, resisting every entreaty, went down the cliff, but ere he had taken many steps, lost his hold and fell to the bottom.

Great were the lamentations, but just as their cries and sobs filled the air, they saw a large white stork, which they recognised as the Emblem of Eternity, rise from the fatal spot, and soar upwards towards the blue sky until lost to their longing gaze, and with gladdened hearts they returned home, for they knew that the soul of their companion had been carried away to enter the land of eternal youth and happiness, and enjoy for ever that which he had sought to obtain for his loved master.

THE MIGNONNETTE.

A FRENCH LEGEND.

IT is said that this general favourite amongst flowers was originally without any fragrance, which so irritated the owner of the ground in which it was growing abundantly, that he one day desired the gardener to throw it away as he would a weed.

The order was just going to be carried out when, to the astonishment of both, a wonderful radiance overshadowed the whole garden, and raising his eyes, the owner beheld the figure of a woman, in whose beautiful face he recognised features similar to the paintings he had seen of the Virgin Mary. With all its beauty there was a sad look on it, and the wistful eyes seemed to plead for the life of the lowly flower by which she stood.

Suddenly she bent down and kissed it three times, and the air was filled with a sweet, strange perfume, overpowering that of any flower for some distance around With a loving smile at the little plant, the Virgin passed away, and from that hour the mignonnette ranked amongst the most beloved and cherished plants possessed by the owner of the garden.

THE WALNUT-TREE.

A FRENCH LEGEND.

A poor man once fell into the power of the law, and his house and goods were ordered to be seized. A bailiff was accordingly told to go to the cottage; passing through an orchard, he saw a peach-tree loaded with beautiful fruit, and the day being very warm and exhausting, he gladly picked and ate three of the finest he could see. His duty at the cottage performed, he returned home, but not long afterwards was attacked by most agonising pain, which he felt sure was caused by the peaches being under a charm. A wizard was at once brought to his aid, and by the command of the former a messenger was sent to gather three leaves from a large walnut which grew near the house, and was known by the name of the "Witches'-tree." They were placed beneath the pillow of the sick-bed, and to the great joy of the sufferer and his friends, the illness at once left him, and he fell into a quiet sleep after two days of severe pain.

A few hours later, another man came in great haste and knocked loudly at the door, and on its being opened, it was seen that he was enduring just the same pain as that from which the bailiff had been so recently relieved.

"Oh Sir!" he exclaimed, "have pity and listen to my story. I have been bewitched by a powerful sorcerer, more potent than he from whom you have just escaped, but I can be cured by the possession of those walnut-leaves that are still lying beneath your pillow. Give them to me, I beseech you, and so enable me to break the spell in which I am now bound."

The bailiff at once complied with the request, when the charm was immediately dissolved, and the man returned home, free both from pain and fear of his enemy.

THE ORANGE BLOSSOM.

A SPANISH LEGEND.

SOON after the introduction by the Moors of the orange tree into Spain, it became a great favourite with the reigning monarch, and the chief floral treasure he owned, was a magnificent one which, from its masses of snowy blossoms, golden fruit, and dark-green leaves, attracted the admiration of all who saw it.

Amongst those who did so was the French Ambassador, and a great longing arose in his heart to possess one like it. Again and again did he endeavour to make his wishes known, but always with the same want of success. Even a slip was unattainable, and the Ambassador was greatly annoyed at his failure. The sight of the beautiful tree every time his official duties took him to the Palace, only increased his desire, and he felt scarcely any price would be too much to give for a cutting.

Time passed on, and one day he was told that a Spanish girl craved an interview with him. She was admitted, and proved to be the daughter of the gardener in charge of the Royal garden. She had heard of the Ambassador's wish, and believed that in obtaining it for him, she might at the same time reap a great benefit for herself.

"She was betrothed," she told him, "but her father, though the King's gardener, was too poor to give her a dowry, and without it the wedding-day could not be fixed. She had now brought him a slip, would he give her enough to make her a very happy girl?"

Overjoyed at his unexpected good fortune, and touched by the pleading look and wistful dark eyes of the suppliant, the Ambassador gave a sum that would make her the richest bride of the district, and she returned home lost in wonder at her changed prospects. The wedding took place very shortly,

and in gratitude to the tree whose beauty had brought her so much happiness, she wore a wreath of orange-blossom, thus showing, as the legend tells us, "all brides what head-dress to wear."

The custom of wearing a wreath and veil instead of a bonnet, was initiated in England by H.M. the Queen, on the occasion of her own wedding.

A STRANGE SEQUEL TO A BALL.

A TRUE INCIDENT.

THE air was heavy with the perfume of stephanotis, lemon and lime-blossom, and the scarlet flower of the pomegranate avenue shone out clearly beneath the brilliant moonlight, as the carriage of Captain Dundas swept round the drive and drew up at his pretty wide-verandahed ***case**** on its return from a ball at Government House.

The Captain held a good position as Surveyor-General in one of the loveliest islands in the Indian Ocean, and was popular with all but those who sought to win his official favor by what was not very far removed from bribery. To ***them***, Captain Dundas was a complete ***bête-noir***. His eyes seemed ever on the look-out to frustrate their schemes for enriching themselves at the expense of Government, and they found their rents raised, when they had hoped, by judicious " *gifts*," to have learned the former were lowered. But to all others, he was courteous and pleasant, and his merry laugh was ever to be heard at the principal social entertainments, the rank of Surveyor-General in that island placing him second after the Governor.

*** The term *case* was a general one given to houses belonging to all classes of Society.**

The servants, in their picturesque Indian dress, stood on the steps to open the carriage door, and Captain Dundas, handing out his wife and sister (the latter of whom was on a visit to him), passed into the drawing-room which opened by French windows on to the verandah. A few minutes were spent in conversation, and they separated for the night, Kathleen Dundas going across as usual to her *petite case* near the beginning of the pomegranate avenue. It was the custom in the island to have numerous two, three, and four-roomed cottages scattered about the grounds surrounding the "great house," so that when the latter was full, relatives and guests might take up their quarters there when paying the visits so frequent in that pleasant, social life.

Kathleen's rooms possessed no less than six doors, two opening on the verandah looking towards the house, two more leading into the sort of jungle-brushwood skirting the carriage-drive, one straight into the wide path dividing it from another *case*, where some of the elder children slept with their aunt, and the sixth opening from one room into the others. The only window was in the dressing-room and looked upon the avenue. In such an exquisite climate, they were scarcely ever all closed, and in fact very few had locks worth mentioning. On her first arrival from England, Kathleen had felt a little nervous, but the feeling soon wore off, and she was ready to join her brother when he laughed at the idea of "danger or solitude" for anyone sleeping in the "garden *cases*." Both of them, however, were soon to learn that the former, at any rate, might be possible.

On the night in question, Kathleen was too tired to do more than place the jewellery she had worn upon the toilet table that stood in one corner of her sleeping apartment. Some feeling. she could not exactly say what, induced her to clôse the door in the dressing-room which was usually left open, the intervening one of course being closed at night, though not bolted. Finding the lock of the former insecure, she drew a light box in front, half-laughing as she did so, "for who was likely to enter 'Auntie's' room but the children"? she thought as she passed back into the other one.

Sleep did not come very quickly that night to sweet

Kathleen Dundas, for memory was recalling looks given, and words spoken that evening, that made life seem very bright to her, and weariness and fatigue were forgotten as Love's magic influence engrossed her every thought.

But the silence that reigned around was suddenly broken, and the girl started up, trembling in every limb. Through the quiet of the perfumed night-air came the tramp, tramp of a man's heavy footstep. Down the long avenue it came—nearer and nearer—till she heard it pass the wide path already mentioned. Still onward went the unseen walker, round the flower-beds and up the steps to the "great house." There the sound was lost, owing to the thick matting laid down on the verandah. But Kathleen Dundas had no fear for the inhabitants, she knew her brother was there, and that the servants' quarters could, if necessary, be soon aroused; it was of the children in the other *case* and of herself that she was thinking. Could she cross the path to them and see that the doors were fastened before the man could pass back from his midnight visit, which could only have one motive—evil of some kind? She was about to rise and make the effort when the ominous tramp—tramp—was again heard coming down the garden.

"He found all locked," she thought with a sigh of relief, "and is going away, how thankful I am! But where can Duoro be?" alluding to a large, powerful dog, savage to all but his master, though occasionally admitting Kathleen into a slight degree of favor. "He is generally loose at night. Perhaps"—but her thought was never finished, for an awful terror seized her as she heard the man suddenly stop and then turn aside towards her *case*. Feeling as though about to lose consciousness, she lay listening intently. Slowly, and almost hesitatingly came the steps on the verandah, and then they moved across to the dressing-room door—the handle was turned and there was a slight push, and then a pause, as though the intruder were considering what next he should do. How thankfully Kathleen remembered having placed the trunk there! Slight as was the obstacle, it might deter him from further attempt. But her congratulations were premature, for the next moment a hand was laid on the handle

of the door beside her, and as it opened, she saw, clear and distinct in the broad moonlight, a tall, strongly-built creole, whose face bore the stamp of unrestrained evil passions, and who carried in his right hand a heavy cudgel. The door was so close to the bed that by stretching out her hand she might have touched him, but fortunately the moonlight did not enter, the *case* being well shaded by the verandah and two noble tamarind trees. Kathleen's great dread was that the mosquito curtains might flutter in the slight draught occasioned by the opening of the door, or that the man might hear the beating of her heart which, at that moment, seemed to her unnaturally loud. She knew that the jewels were out of sight and so bent all her efforts to remain motionless, for the slightest movement might betray her! She could tell by his face that coming out of the broad moonlight he was as yet unable to make out anything very clearly, and she watched anxiously the dark louring countenance, with its heavy jaw, sullen mouth and eyes full of a gloomy, fierce expression that filled her with an unspeakable terror.

"Would he never move"? she thought, as the creole continued to stand there, gazing straight into the room, and the strain on her nerves grew every instant more difficult to bear. Suddenly a strange, puzzled look came over the man's face, and he made a step forward into the room, came to a pause, looked round him in a hesitating, half-suspicious manner and then hurriedly drew back, crossed the verandah and went down the avenue towards the high road as though something had startled him.

As the last faint sound of his footsteps died away, Kathleen Dundas sank back in a dead swoon, and when she revived, the sun was shining brightly, and her favorite minahs were calling to one another as they flitted about the tamarind-trees.

"Was it a dream"? the girl thought, as she recalled the events of the past night, but even as she did so, the half-open door beside her caught her eyes and warned her that the creole's visit had been no vision conjured up in her sleep.

Her recital only evoked the laughter of her brother, who ridiculed the whole thing in his usual jesting style. Later in the day however, brought a change in his opinions, for when

the head of the police stationed in the neighbourhood, called with two of his men to know if any robbery had occurred at Rose Cottage the previous night, Captain Dundas began to think that perhaps there *might* be some grounds for belief in Kathleen's strange story.

According to the Inspector's tale, a creole had been caught that morning about two miles from the Dundas' house, in the very act of robbery at the residence of Mr. Temple, a Police Magistrate. On being questioned, he admitted having tried several other houses, amongst them that of the Surveyor-General. His object there was not so much to rob the "great house," though he had gone round it, as to enter one of the "garden *cases*" with the view of carrying off some grain. He had often been there before successfully. The puzzled look on his face was due to the strange aspect the room wore. Though too dark to see clearly, he could nevertheless make out that there were none of the sacks usually piled there, and the absence made him doubtful as to entering. His depredations might have been discovered, and some trap have been laid for his capture. Hence his hesitation and subsequent rapid departure. He had not been since Kathleen Dundas had arrived on a visit, so was perfectly unaware of any change having been made in the room.

"It was well for Miss Dundas that he was ignorant," concluded Inspector Anson. "The fellow would not have stopped at much if he had known the jewellery was there. However, he will not have any opportunity for that sort of thing for some time to come, as he is almost certain to get a heavy sentence."

It was a long time before Kathleen could quite forget that eventful night. The creole's face would come before her in her dreams, and she would wake up trembling with fright, and the fact so impressed Mrs. Dundas that when, a few months later, her sister-in-law was married to one well-deserving of the love he had gained, the *case* was dismantled and turned once more into a store-room, whose bolts were too strong to ever allow any burglar to pay it such another visit.

The Creole received the punishment mentioned by the Inspector, and when making some further enquiries on the

subject, Captain Dundas found that Douro's unaccountable silence on the occasion was explained by the fact that he had strangely enough, been tied up that night in the stable. As the rule was, that the dog should always be loose at that time, his master not unnaturally came to the conclusion that the groom (in whose special charge the animal was placed), knew more of the affair than he at all chose to acknowledge.

THE GHOST OF WANGANILLA.

FOUNDED ON FACT.

"NEVER heard of an Australian ghost-story, Straubenzie? Wait till after dinner, and I will make you alter your opinion that such tales are unknown in Victoria."

The speaker laughed as he spoke, but before his companion could reply, the deep tones of a gong rang out on the perfumed evening air, announcing the advent of dinner, welcome tidings to the somewhat weary travellers who had only that afternoon arrived from Melbourne at Mount-View station, the property of the young squatter with whose remark our tale opens.

It was the eve of the New-Year, and home seemed very sweet to Harry Meredith, for business had compelled him, for the first time since his marriage, to spend the Master's birthday in the crowded metropolis instead of in the pure air of Mount View, and it was with evident pleasure that he ushered Lionel Straubenzie (an English school-mate recently arrived from England) into the pretty dining-room where Mrs. Meredith and her two golden-haired darlings awaited them.

The conversation during dinner turned mostly upon English topics—both Harry and his pleasant frank-mannered wife claiming the old country as their own—and it was not till the latter had gone away with the children, that Lionel remembered his host's promise of a story.

"Now for your ghost, Harry" he said somewhat incredulously, "though I must confess I do not expect one of the correct type; your 'marvellous Melbourne' is altogether too new for that style of thing."

A gleam of amusement shot from Mr. Meredith's blue eyes; "Come out on the verandah," he said, "and I will show you the very hill (at least, in the distance) where, on moonlight nights, the ghost of Wanganilla used to appear to those passing below."

As he spoke, he motioned to his companion to pass through the open window by which they had been standing, and following him, pointed out the spot to which he had just alluded.

The scene was a fair one, and was full of interest to Lionel, differing as it did, so entirely from the lovely English landscapes with their rich meadow-lands, spangled with daisies and buttercups and shadowed by great oaks, to which his eyes had been so long accustomed, and which, in very truth, he thought could not be equalled anywhere.

Mount-View, as its name indicates, stood on rising ground. A wide verandah ran round three sides of the house, the trellis-work almost hidden by flowering creepers. A flight of steps led down to the well-kept garden, which even at that season of the year looked tolerably fresh and green, for Mr. Meredith and his wife were real flower-lovers, and spared neither time nor trouble in connection with their favorite pastime. The sun had just set in a glory of gold and crimson clouds, and the fragrance of innumerable blossoms filled the evening air, the perfume from the great beds of mignonette that lay on either side of the steps, "outrivalling," as Lionel said, "the rarest perfume ever sent out by Rimmel himself." From the giant willows that formed the boundary between the garden and the creek that ran below it, came the sweet musical call of minahs and magpies as they sought their nightly shelter, and the ever-deepening hum of the grasshoppers was every now and then broken into by the croak of the frogs from their home in the banks of the creek just mentioned. The gorgeous sunset faded, and the stars, "the forget-me-nots of the angels," came out one by one in the

deep blue sky, whilst a young moon shed her silvery light over the scene, causing the green trees scattered about the paddocks that stretched for miles around, to cast weird shadows on the dry grass beneath them. Far away in the distance was a range of hills, and it was towards one of these Mr. Meredith now pointed as, pushing a chair towards his friend and seating himself in another, he commenced his story:—

"It is about ten years since that incident, to which I refer happened, and there are many in this district who still remember the facts. At that time, the stations were far more scattered than they now are, and social meetings were consequently appreciated in a high degree. The principal one was a sort of monthly assembly at the nearest township, and I soon became one of the constant attendants. The dance was always held on moonlight nights, as the roads were not then in very first-rate order, and in fact had some dangerous bits here and there. Those from our neighbourhood generally rode over in a party, but, as it happened, I never made one of it, as from one cause or another, I had been away from Mount-View at the time.

"I had not however failed to hear of the 'Ghost of Wanganilla,' though, like yourself, Straubenzie, I laughed at the idea of anything of that nature in practical Australia. Still month after month, the same tale was repeated, and without variation. Had it been only timid girls who mentioned it, the matter would have passed from my memory, but I was told it by men whose bravery was unquestionable, and their story was ever the same.

"From what I could gather, it seemed that at the turn of the road which you can just make out winding round the foot of that hill crowned with dark foliage, the figure, apparently that of a woman, with outstretched arms and altogether defiant attitude was to be seen, motionless as a statue, almost at the top of the ascent. It was plainly visible to every one coming that way, but as yet, none had attempted, or perhaps cared, to solve the mystery of who or what it might be.

"The monthly dance came round at last, when I was at home, and I determined to see for myself this much-talked-of ghost. My resolution alarmed some of the girls who were

to be of the party, and they tried vainly to induce me to alter it. There was one amongst them who was rapidly becoming 'my bright particular star,' and perhaps it was on that account, and because I sought to stand high in her estimation, that I announced my intention of going up the hill the night of the assembly.

"The evening of the 18th of October proved a beautiful one, and about twenty of us started on horseback. I forgot to mention that as most of the ladies preferrèd riding, (indeed driving would, in some parts, have been impossible,) they sent all ball-room requirements on beforehand to the one hotel to be found in the little township.

"I had almost forgotten my proposed adventure in the pleasant companionship of the young lady already mentioned, when it was recalled to me by Mrs Onslow, who resided then a few miles from here. We met her, you may remember, in Melbourne, last week. They have been lately home for the benefit of Mr Onslow's health."

"We are coming to the turn of the road," she said, half jestingly, "so prepare for the ghost, Mr Meredith. It is sure to be seen on such a lovely moonlight evening."

"Well, we will soon find out who or what it is," I returned, "for I mean to go up the hill before I attend the dance."

"'Are you in earnest?' the sweet voice of my companion whispered, as our horses increased their pace and we neared the spot that had gained so evil a reputation. 'Of course I do not believe in ghosts, but it may be someone playing an ill-timed practical jest. I wish you would not attempt it, Mr. Meredith.'

"Something in the tone made my heart leap with sudden joy, and I turned towards the speaker. The clear brown eyes fell before my glance, but not before I had learnt the joyful truth that my love was known, and, I even dared to believe, returned.

"There was no time to answer, for we had just turned the corner, and Rollo (the old horse you noticed in the paddock before dinner—a splendid animal he was in those days, dear old fellow,) suddenly shied with such impetuosity that I knew something had startled him, even without the excited murmur

that at once broke from those around us—'The ghost! the ghost! are you convinced *now*, Meredith?'

"I looked in the direction of the outstretched hands, and for a moment, I confess, Straubenzie, my heart beat quicker than its wont. Right on the steepest portion of the ascent, the dark background of firs throwing it out with strange effect, stood the figure, so often described to me. It was, as I have said, apparently that of a woman of more than ordinary height, the arms were held aloft in anger, or, it might be, despair, and it seemed dressed in a long, white robe. There was neither sound nor movement belonging to it, and a feeling of awe crept over our party, including myself. That the horses felt the influence of the strange scene was evident from their restless movements, and Rollo trembled at times beneath me.

"Mrs. Onslow was the first to speak. 'Are you satisfied Mr. Meredith?' she enquired, 'or do you still believe the ghost of Wanganilla a myth?"

"So little satisfied," I answered gravely, "that I mean to ride up and see what it is. My own opinion is that that figure is either an insane woman or some one playing an ill-timed jest. If the latter,' I added sternly, as I caught a glimpse of my 'star's' wistful eyes, it will be the worse for him, and if it be the former, she should be cared-for, both for her own and other people's safety. A bad accident, to say the least of it, might result from coming unexpectedly on such a sight. You can go on,' I continued, addressing the group generally, 'and I will overtake you'.

"But my proposition met with a decided negative, and it was decided that they would all remain and watch the adventure.

"'Wish me success,' I said gaily, turning to my companion, whose white face told that she, at any rate, did not like my proposed excursion, 'and give me a special welcome back, I whispered, as I laid my hand on her restless chestnut's mane and strove to soothe the frightened brute into something like quietude.'"

"Once again our eyes met, telling 'the old sweet story that yet is always new,' and then, with a parting jest to the others,

I began the ascent. It proved more troublesome than I had anticipated, for there was no path, so to speak, and Rollo had to pick his way as best he could; but I soon found that that was the least of the difficulty. So long as bushes and branches of trees intervened, the horse did well enough, but the least glimpse of that white motionless figure would cause him to either shy violently—no pleasant thing when it brought one's head into close contact with some gnarled branch or stem, as you may imagine—or come to an abrupt pause, shivering till I could feel him shake beneath me.

"It was a strange, eerie feeling, and as I glanced back at the quiet group at the foot of the hill, I thought what a weird scene we must present—the dark wooded ascent with its ghastly moonlight effects, the restless horse, and the white figure apparently watching and waiting our coming! Gradually I managed to get the bay nearer and nearer, and my curiosity deepened as I did so. What *could* it be? a ghost? Honestly, Straubenzie, for a few minutes my ideas as to the supernatural received something of a shock, and I confessed to myself that there might possibly be more in it than I had, as yet, been willing to admit. But almost with the acknowledgement, my common-sense returned, and I knew that there must be some other explanation.

"But I was not to be the one to solve the mystery after all, for just at that moment, as we were within but a short distance of the summit, the horse gave another and a wilder shy, and with a loud snort of terror sprang so suddenly on one side that I was unseated, and in falling, struck my head (so I was told later,) against one of the large rough stones that lay scattered around.

"How long I lay there I knew not, for on opening my eyes I found myself in a comfortable but perfectly strange room. The man standing by the window, however, and who turned at once at my first movement, was no stranger, and weak as I was, my heart beat high with joy, for in the well-known features, I recognised those of my "star's" father, whose house was the nearest to the scene of my disaster.

"'Thank God!' were his first words, as he came to the bed-side, and took my hand in his, 'we shall have you about soon again, I trust, Meredith.'

"My memory was becoming stronger, and as he ended, I asked 'Did they bring me here after my fall? What has been the matter?'

"'A broken arm, and a threatened brain fever,' was the reply, 'this is the only time you have spoken coherently during the last fortnight, and you must not excite yourself. We will tell you all after the doctor's visit. He is due in a few minutes. I will tell the nurse you are awake; she only went for her breakfast and I was watching you whilst she was away.'

"'You have been very good,' I returned in a whisper, for my strength seemed strangely gone, 'but,' I continued, making an effort to retain him, as he turned to leave the room, 'tell me one thing more, your daughter, is she well? I remember her horse was fidgetty, and inclined to bolt.'

"'Ellie is very well,' her father answered with a smile, 'but there is the doctor coming up the road. I will go and tell him of the improved state of affairs.'

"Youth and a good constitution, with God's blessing, soon brought me far on the road to recovery, and I then learnt the result of our evening's adventure. As you can imagine, the assembly saw none of our party that night, and many were the surmises as to our absence. As soon as my fall was observed, all the men dismounted and a rush made by them to the 'haunted hill.' Half-way up, they came upon Rollo, apparently in a paroxysm of fear, and trembling as though he had the ague. A few steps more brought them to where I was lying utterly unconscious, and with my left arm doubled under me in such a style that they could at once see that it was broken by my fall. I was lifted up by kindly, willing arms, and carried down to where the remainder of the group were still standing, and then Cecil Douglas, my great friend, (he is over in Queensland now,) declared his intention of looking after the ghost.

"'I believe Meredith is right, poor fellow,' he concluded, 'it is some practical joke played on moonlight nights, and I intend to put an end to it. I shall walk up, though, after Rollo's escapade. Who will come with me? We shall have ample time before the messengers return with a conveyance, and Harry is best kept quiet in Mrs. Onslow's charge.'

"Two or three other men volunteered, and the party started on their voyage of discovery, their previous high spirits, however, a good deal lessened by my accident, for we were all on very friendly terms. As I was told during the pleasant days of convalescence, they soon gained the so-called haunted spot, none of them, as they openly avowed, particularly liking the look of affairs. A moaning wind had arisen, and clouds occasionally obscured the moon, and the weird figure seemed to wave its long arms as though in defiance of the rapidly approaching storm. A distant roll of thunder added to the solemnity of the scene, and as the lightning played around them, more than one of the group spoke of the foolhardiness of going on.

"'We are almost at the top, another minute or so, will bring us near enough to discover who or what stands there,' Cecil exclaimed, 'it will never do to go back without finding out." He paused suddenly and looked round at his companions, for he was slightly in advance. 'Do you see?' he began, but a blinding flash of lightning with a peal of thunder that seemed to shake the very ground beneath them, interrupted him, and it was a minute or so before he could make himself heard. 'Did you see?' he again asked, but his remark was cut short by his brother's startled words—'The ghost is gone? what on earth can it be?'

Cecil laughed, "'Vanished in a right orthodox and ghostly style, Frank—what a laugh we shall have against all the believers in the ghost of Wanganilla; Come up and see,' he added to his wondering listeners, 'where were your eyes not to notice what I did just now?'

"A few steps brought them to the spot, and then a general laugh broke from their lips, though a feeling of intense gratitude filled their hearts at the escape they had just had from the lightning. The storm had passed over in that vivid flash and heavy peal, as could be told by the now distant rolls of thunder and gleams of greenish light. The destruction of the ghost had been wrought by that flash, and the mystery was for ever solved. Prone on the ground lay a dead gum-tree, one that had been evidently struck long before, for there was not a vestige of life in stem or branches, which were bleached by the stroke. The conformation of the tree was an unusually strange one

naturally, and the weird, uncanny effect was of course increased by the first stroke, which had lopped off some of the upper branches, leaving it, as has been said, with a close resemblance to the figure of a woman with out-stretched arms. The curious appearance of white drapery was owing to some strange effect of the moonlight, which also accounted for its being so plainly visible only on such evenings.

"It did not take them long to overtake the remainder of the party, who were making their way back to the house where, as I told you, I was so kindly nursed. Great was the surprise, and in some cases, even vexation, that so absurd an explanation could be given of the much talked-of-ghost, but the most sensible of the party were heartily glad that the matter had been cleared up, and future accidents at the turn of the road prevented.

"My broken arm soon healed, but the blow to my head proved much more serious, and even when the doctor pronounced me convalescent, he urged me to take a holiday from station-life, and go for a long sea-voyage.

"'I urge it the more willingly,' he said with a kindly smile, 'that I fancy you will not go alone—is it not so?' he added, as my 'star' just then entered the room.

"To make a long story short, I may say that he was right, and early in January I was on board one of the P. and O. boats bound for a two years' trip to Europe, and with the glad knowledge that the one dearest to me on earth was mine by the blessing of the dear Master whom we both loved and served."

"'Then I have had the pleasure of meeting your 'star' to-day?' Lionel Straubenzie enquired. 'Well, Harry, she is truly one that any man would be fortunate to possess. If the ghost brought others as much happiness as it has to you, its remembrance ought to be a happy one.'

Harry Meredith's blue eyes turned lovingly to his wife, who at that moment came on the verandah.

"The Master has, indeed, blessed my home," he said, in a low tone, "and we strive each year to extend those blessings to others. May this New-Year see us ever doing more for His cause, and for those whose lot in life is not so bright as ours. Ellie," he continued, as Mrs Meredith, came up to where they had risen to meet her. "I have been telling Lionel of our

famous 'ghost.' Will you do your share by showing him our memento of it? We keep it for the benefit of unbelieving listeners, do we not, dear?" he asked laughingly, as he handed his wife a prettily-carved paper-cutter, taken from a table near them.

Mrs Meredith glanced with an amused look at her husband. "Has Mr. Straubenzie been unbelieving, Harry? I think you were, too, that eventful evening! Look," she added, turning to their guest, "this is made of the wood of the tree itself. Harry carved it for me when he was getting well from that dreadful fall. Is it not pretty? So now," she laughed, "you can not only say you have ***heard*** an Australian 'ghost' story, but actually ***touched the ghost.***"

TRACKED BY BUSHRANGERS.

A STORY OF THE FIFTIES.

THE Christmas of 185— was close at hand, and promised to be an unusually warm one, but at Mooloobа, the station of Mr. Harrington, a wealthy squatter in the North-eastern district, the preparations for the season of "peace and good-will" went forward as briskly as though it had been in dear old England instead of sunny Victoria. Children were rejoicing at freedom from lessons, and their elders were welcoming friends coming to spend their holidays away from the bustle and crowd of Melbourne. The rambling, one-storied house, full of quaint, unexpected nooks and corners, had not a spare room, but Mr. and Mrs. Harrington seemed to thoroughly agree in the old saying "the more, the merrier," and the squatter's kindly face grew brighter at every fresh arrival. Amongst them was a Mr. Ackroyd, a Superintendent of Police, who was engaged to Laura Evesham, the pretty governess to the Harrington children, and as popular with the neighboring families as was the kind-hearted, hospitable squatter himself.

Christmas-day fell on a Friday, and the Monday previous, Mr. Harrington rode over to the nearest township, a distance of some ten miles, to be present at a sale in which he was interested, being the owner of a large mob of cattle sent to it. He remained the greater part of the day, chatting first to one, and then to another of his numerous friends, and left about eight in the evening, well satisfied with the result of the day's sale, so far as he was concerned, for he carried with him over £2,500 in notes and gold in exchange for his cattle.

It was a lovely moonlight night, clear as day, and Mr. Harrington started gaily enough, though some of the more prudent squatters, who had been present during the sale, remonstrated with him on returning home with so much money in his possession unattended.

"It is simply fool-hardy, Harrington," was the remark of Mr. Kelson, a friend of many years' standing, "They were saying this afternoon inside there," and he glanced back at the rough hotel from which a group of men had just emerged, "that Wilson and some of his gang have been lately seen hanging about these parts, just suppose they should in any way have learnt that you have money upon you, and that you have started alone! What could you do against two or three ruffians like them? O yes, I see that," he continued, as Mr. Harrington held up a formidable-looking revolver, "but you may be (and probably are sure to be), taken unawares. Do take advice for once, Harrington, and start to-morrow, when your own people will be going back. It is too large a sum to carry in safety in the way you propose."

Mr. Harrington laughed, "What has come over you, Kelson? I shall be home in little more than an hour's time, and with the moon almost at the full, I can see as well as though it were broad noon-day. I must go back to-night, for I want to bank the money before the 25th, and if I do not do it to-morrow, I cannot be back in time for Christmas, and that would be a disappointment for us all. There are always bush-ranging reports about, but it is years since any of them have proved correct so far as this district is concerned, at any rate."

"That does not prove that it will always be so, Mr. Harrington," said the landlord, who had come out on hearing the discussion. "There were two or three strangers at the sale to-day whose looks I did not quite like, they bought nothing, and now I think of it, one or other of them was always in your neighborhood after the sales were effected. It might really be better to wait, Sir, as Mr. Kelson proposes."

"Nonsense, Barnes," was the squatter's somewhat angry remark, "I know what I am about. Well, a prosperous Christmas and New-Year to you," he added in his usual good-tempered manner, as he gave the man a parting nod, and with an injunction to Mr. Kelson and one or two others "not to

forget to be in good time on the 24th," set off at a gallop that soon carried him out of sight of the group who stood rather anxiously watching him.

"I hope no harm will come of it," Mr. Kelson at length remarked, "for when Harrington is in one of his reckless moods, as he is to-night, there is no persuading him to alter his mind. By-the-bye," turning round to the landlord, "what was that stranger like? A tall, black-haired man with heavy jaw and surly manner? He came in for a drink when I was speaking to Mr. Dysart about that brown horse, was that the man, Barnes?"

"The very same, Sir," was the answer, "and more than that, I saw him speaking afterwards to the others, and they all turned and looked at Mr. Harrington. I meant to have told him how they had been hanging about him during the after noon, but I could not get the time till just now."

"Well, we can only hope for the best," Mr. Kelson said, as he in turn rode off with some of his friends.

Mr. Harrington was meantime far on his way to Mooloolooba. He was busily recalling the events of the past day when in the quiet of the evening, he thought he heard the distant sound of horses' hoofs. His own bay was going rather slowly at the moment over a bit of sandy ground, so that its tread was somewhat muffled, and the squatter drew rein to listen more attentively. His face lost its careless, cheerful expression as the steady beat came onward, and he glanced somewhat uneasily around him.

"Kelson was in the right," he thought, "it was a risky thing to start with all this money on me. Well, I can only make a fight for it if the worst comes to the worst, and it is all in wiser hands than mine, God is over all."

Just then, the light breeze freshened, and with it came, growing ever louder and nearer, that ominous sound of horses' hoofs.

"Coming up in a quick, steady gallop," was Mr. Harrington's conclusion after another moment's attentive listening, "it is of no use trying to ride on ahead, those men, whoever they may be, are as well-mounted as myself. No—I must try some other plan of evading them."

He looked around him to see how he might best shelter himself. The place was a lonely spot, well calculated, as he thought half-bitterly, for any deeds of violence. The track he had been following, wound in and out amidst clumps of gum and other trees, and a half-dry creek with high, steep banks lay on the left hand. He was about to head his horse for the latter, intending to lead it down into the water and remain there until the riders were past, trusting for concealment to the high banks already mentioned, when he suddenly stopped. "Not shelter enough," he muttered half-aloud; "I must think of something else, and quickly too, there is no time to lose."

A sudden thought appeared to strike him, and dismounting, he hastily led the horse on to a strip of sward that bordered the track on the right, and after going a few steps, turned sharply round for about fifty yards till he came to a group of immense gum-trees whose branches threw a dense shadow on the ground in striking contrast to the moon-lit scene beyond them. Into the very heart of this shade Mr. Harrington penetrated, then taking up his position in such a manner as to make the animal stand pressing its head down against his shoulder, and throwing one arm round it to keep it steady, he drew out the revolver he had jestingly shown to Mr. Kelson and awaited the arrival of those whom he now felt certain were in pursuit of him.

His reason for keeping Bevis so close to him was that he feared the advent of the other horses would excite the bay, and thereby lead to his discovery.

He had not long to remain in suspense, for he had scarcely completed all his arrangements when two men, well armed and mounted, came at full gallop round the bend of the winding track, but pulled up when they had gone about a quarter of a mile from where he was concealed Both gave vent to a volley of oaths as they looked at one another.

"Where can he have gone? We ought to have heard the sound of his horses' hoofs before now. The sandy ground ends just below here," said one of the new arrivals, in whom the squatter had at once recognised the man whom he remembered had stood very near him several times during the sale. He had not recalled the fact before, even when Barnes spoke, but it flashed across his memory now.

"What shall we do?" his companion asked, "is there any short cut that he can have taken, Joe? you know the road better than me. If there be, we ought to separate and try them. It will never do to let him reach Moolooba; if he do, we may as well give up all hope of getting that £2,000 he is carrying."

"It is nearer £3,000," was the reply, "and he must not be allowed to reach the station. He has not gone round, you may be sure. He has no suspicion that we are following him, and would keep on this track, it is the best of the two. It is queer, though, that we did not hear the horse. May-be he kept it as much as possible on any grass there was. Well, it is no use wasting time, come on, Bill;" and the next moment they were again off on their terrible errand.

An involuntary shudder had run through the squatter's frame as he saw the horses stop, and his hand closed more firmly on the revolver as though he were inwardly resolving to sell his life dearly, should the outlaws, as seemed only too probable, return for some reason and his retreat be discovered.

Though known as one of the truest shots in the district, it would still be fearful odds for him if it came to a fight, two against one, and both of the former more powerfully-built than he was. It was well for Arthur Harrington that in that hour of supreme peril, he could look up with undaunted faith to Him who said, "Be not afraid—I am with you always." But even as he watched them, they came again to a pause, and this time he was at no loss to account for the movement. Bevis, who had been restless ever since the other horses had gone by, had suddenly, and in spite of all his master's efforts, freed his head and given the much-dreaded neigh.

"No hope of an escape now, I fear," the former thought, "the sound is almost sure to bring them back on a search," but to his infinite surprise and relief, the halt was only momentary. They had indeed heard the neigh, but happily attributed it to quite a different cause.

"Did you hear that?" the younger man had enquired, as they simultaneously drew their reins. "A horse neighed close to us."

"I heard it, but it is only one of those running in the paddock to our left. It has caught sight of ours, that is all,"

was the other's reply as he pointed in the indicated direction.

The squatter listened till he lost the last faint sound of the reckless gallop, his thoughts meanwhile flying back to the dear home-circle who were probably even then looking for his arrival, and a prayer went up for their safety as well as for his own. If he were shot down on his road back, a visit might be paid the station by some of the gang, for doubtless they were all in the neighbourhood, watching for the success of the two in pursuit of him. Moolooba was barely four miles away, they might go there, work their evil will, and be far off before morning or before tidings could be sent to any one. If he had only brought back one or two of the hands with him? There would have been ample then left behind to carry out the instructions he had given them for the next day.

The scene, during the bushrangers' consultation, would have formed a good subject for a painting. The tall, muscular men with the silvery moonlight falling full on their faces, branded with every evil passion, and on the deadly weapons they carried—the well-trained horses, evidently chosen for their powers of speed and endurance, and behind the group, crouching in the dense shadow that by contrast with the brilliant moonlight around, looked of almost inky blackness, the man whose money was tempting them on to a deed of murder, one hand still holding his revolver, and the other pressing against him the head of the noble animal which had borne him safely through many a wild adventure, but whose speed had never been tried as it was about to be during the next twenty minutes.

Making sure that his enemies were fairly off, Mr. Harrington rose to his feet and led his horse out on the further side of the clump in which they had both been hidden, mounted and at once set off by a short cut that would bring him out on his former track about a mile from home. If he could reach that spot before the bushrangers passed it, he would, in all human probability, be safe—but—was it possible? The former had had a good start of him, and they might just meet at the junction of the paths. The squatter had always made a great favourite of the bay he was now riding, and he knew if the distance *could* be compassed in the required time, that the horse would not fail him. But could it be done? He bent over and stroked the arched

neck with the accustomed caress, and the gallant brute tossed its head as though understanding every word said to it :—

"Bevis, dear old fellow, push on as you never did before, your master's life depends, under God, upon your speed to-night."

And well did the noble bay respond to its master's appeal, for the junction was reached in safety, but even as they dashed past it, Mr. Harrington saw the figures of the two men on horseback coming up the track and following him in hot pursuit. The solemn stillness of the night was broken by the clatter of the horses' flying hoofs, and once and again, a bullet whistled past the squatter, but Bevis still kept ahead. The pace, was, however, as the former knew well enough, too severe to be continued for any length of time, and the bush-rangers' horses were fresher than his own. He looked back and saw how the distance was beginning to decrease, and his heart sank—so near home, and yet to be lost. "Courage, Bevis," he whispered as he stroked the poor bay, "only a few more yards, Beauty, (giving it the childrens' pet name) and we shall both be in safety."

As though answering to the touch of the loved hand, Bevis sprang forward with renewed vigour, and a fervent thanksgiving escaped Mr. Harrington's lips as the next moment brought him in view of George Ackroyd, followed by several other men. They had heard the shots, and knowing of their host's rash proposal to bring home the money that night, had at once started to see what was the matter. The bushrangers' however, had been too wary to continue the chase as soon as they caught sight of the new arrivals and were already beyond the reach of a shot.

"We must capture them, if possible," the Superintendent of Police said, after hurried explanations had been given and received. "If you will return home and relieve Mrs. Harrington's anxiety," he continued, turning to the squatter, who had dismounted, and was standing caressing his horse whilst he spoke to his eldest son, a fine lad of eighteen, "we will go on and look after these men. But we have no time to lose," he added, "for they seemed to be splendidly mounted."

As no better plan could be devised at the moment, Mr.

Harrington agreed, and the rest of the party set off on their quest, whilst Bevis and his master gladly pursued their short journey home. Very heartfelt and sincere were the thanksgivings offered that night at Moolooba.

It was past midnight when the baffled Superintendent and his friends returned. They had searched all round the vicinity where Mr. Harrington had taken shelter, but no trace was to be found of the bushrangers.

"I wonder, father, if either of the men were Wilson himself"? one of the boys asked on their return.

"I have no idea, Frank. I have often heard stories of his recklessness and cruelty, but strangely enough, I do not think he was ever described to me. If he were either of the two, I should fancy he was the one I noticed by my side at the sale. The other looked too young a man."

"I hope they are not lurking anywhere about the grounds," remarked Laura, as they were separating for the night. There was a general laugh, even gentle Mrs. Harrington, who had been sorely terrified at the account of her husband's recent peril, joining in it.

"What should they be doing there?" Mr. Ackroyd asked jestingly. "Why, we saw them riding for their lives the opposite way. How do you suppose they got back here with so many eyes on the look-out for them, Laura?"

Miss Evesham shook her pretty head. "You may all laugh, but I have a dreadful feeling we shall hear more about them. They seemed so bent upon getting that money. I wish we had some of your troopers within reach, George."

Her lover laughed, "If they come, they will find there are enough of us here to make a good fight, but I expect they gave it up as a bad job when they saw our party. Do not be frightened, darling," he added in a whisper, as he drew her back into the now empty room for a parting good-night kiss; "you do not think I would jest if I thought there were any danger? Please God, your rest will be as undisturbed as usual."

And Laura looked up into the frank, kindly face, and knew that she might be at peace, so far as human fore-sight allowed, for nothing but truth was ever heard from the lips of George Ackroyd.

The intention of banking the money on the following day

was not carried out, for Mr. Harrington arose not feeling in his usual health. The great and long-continued heat, combined with the excitement of the previous evening, had doubtless something to do with it, and Mrs. Harrington, who secretly dreaded the proposed errand, (for Laura Evesham's fears had awakened her own,) persuaded her husband to put it off until after Christmas.

For many years past, the squatter had always banked at a township about twenty miles off on the other side of the station to that where the cattle-sale had been held. The manager and he had as boys, been school-fellows in England, and Mr. Harrington always enjoyed a chat with him when he paid in his money. His usual custom was to stay the next day with his friend, hence his remark to Mr. Kelson that unless the £2,500 were banked on the Tuesday, he would not be home in time for Friday, the Master's birthday.

The day passed without any further tidings of the bushrangers, and on Wednesday morning, a pic-nic was organised by Laura and Mr. Ackroyd for the special benefit of the children. Late in the evening, the former was sitting in the verandah that ran round three sides of the house, talking with her sister, (a governess like herself) who had arrived that afternoon to spend her holiday at hospitable Moolooba. The visit had been arranged as a surprise to Laura, and the pic-nic allowed with the express purpose of having her away at the time of the girl's arrival. The delight of the two sisters on meeting after more than a year's separation can be imagined. In the midst of happy questions and answers as to family matters, Agnes Evesham suddenly started up with a frightened look.

"What was that, Laura"? she whispered, "that odd, scuffling noise at that end of the verandah"? and she pointed to where a mass of morning-glory and passion-flowers almost hid the corner. "Was it a snake, do you think, or," she added, drawing closer to her sister, "perhaps it was one of those dreadful men you were telling me about just now?"

"Come inside," was all Laura's reply, as she hastily drew her into the hall, and then passed on to the drawing-room, exclaiming,

"Mr Harrington—George—come out at once—a man has been hiding in the verandah; Agnes heard a rustling, and at the same moment I caught sight of him as he rushed past the orange-tree by the steps. Do come and search, there may be others besides him, who may be in the house."

The girl's terror was so evident that Mr Harrington refrained from the jesting reply that was on his lips, and he only said kindly—"Well, we will go at once. You two run to Mrs Harrington, she is busy in the nursery, and stay with her till we come back. Call some of the men, Edward," he continued to his son, as he himself and George Ackroyd left the house.

"It is all a fancy, I expect, of the girls," the squatter said in a half-amused tone; "they had been talking over my ride and made themselves nervous. It was probably a native-cat or a snake. One of the latter was killed close by there this morning. As to seeing the man, that must have been pure fancy, you know."

"I am not so sure of that," his companion replied; "Laura has good nerves in general, and splendid eye-sight. I should say the probabilities are in favor of what she said. It is possible that those men know where you are in the habit of banking your money, and may have been lying in wait for you, then finding that you did not pass that way, one of them may be lurking about the grounds intending to make another attempt this evening. I think you would do well to keep watch to-night," the superintendent concluded.

"Well, perhaps so," was the answer; "you are no alarmist, Ackroyd, I know, and would not give such advice unnecessarily. Ah," Mr. Harrington added rather excitedly, "Miss Evesham was right, I believe. Look here," and he pointed to a quantity of the creepers hanging torn from the trellis-work; "that was done when the rustling was heard, you may depend upon it. Here come the men, we will have a good search. A capital thought, Carter, to bring the lanterns, we shall need them, for the moon has almost set. Have you got your revolver, George? The fellow is probably armed, so we had better look out."

From the nursery-windows a view of that portion of the garden where the orangery commenced, was to be obtained,

and Laura and Agnes Evesham stationed themselves at one of them to watch for the result of the search, the former seeking to quiet her anxious heart by casting its care on One whom she knew would never fail her, even in the hour of bitterest terror.

"How picturesque it looks," Agnes exclaimed after a few moments' silence, and the remark was a true one. The moon had sunk, and it was by the lighted lanterns that the men were now moving about the garden. Every now and then a group would start into prominence as a light was held up, and the next instant it was gone, as though swallowed up by the darkness around. Then the red glare was seen in another direction, and the snowy blossoms of the great orange-trees that were the pride of Moolooba, flashed for a brief space into view, and were lost to the eyes, though the rich, fragrant perfume that filled the air told plainly of where they grew. A few minutes, and gigantic glow-worms appeared moving near the fence dividing the fruit and flower-gardens as some of the party sought for traces of any footsteps in that direction. Here and there, an unusually large gum-tree stood out distinct against the sky where the stars were beginning to shine, whilst the cry of the unseen oppossum was occasionally heard from the branches.

Not for very long, however, did the sisters gaze undisturbed on the pretty scene, for Mr. Harrington's voice was soon heard recalling the scattered party, and shortly after he entered the nursery saying in a half-satirical, half-jesting tone to Laura, "A pretty wild-goose search you sent us on, young lady. What next will you and your sister imagine?"

The girl looked puzzled. "Indeed, Mr. Harrington, I thought I saw the man," she said apologetically. "I am so sorry you had so much trouble. But there was no doubt about that curious rustling in the verandah, whatever may have caused it," she added seriously.

"Ah, yes," the squatter replied, turning away rather hastily; "a snake was killed there to-day, you know. Better not let the children go too near the place to-morrow till one of the men has examined the spot. Do not mention about the torn creepers," he whispered to Mr. Ackroyd, as he turned to leave the room, "that is the one feature I do not like, but

there is no need to alarm my wife and the girls unnecessarily. We will keep a sharp look-out, though, to-night."

Nothing however occurred, and the next morning rose bright and sunny, and Mr. Harrington announced at breakfast "that the bushranger and his supposed doings were tabooed subjects—at any rate for that day." Mr. Kelson and the other friends came over to the annual Christmas-Eve dinner, "and all went merry as a marriage-bell." Mr. Kelson, who was a bachelor, remained as was his custom, for the next day, but the other guests left about ten o'clock, and by eleven, Moolooba appeared sunk in complete repose.

There was one however who did not share in such utter forgetfulness of the outlaw (for even Laura, in the amusement of the evening seemed to have lost her fears,) and that was the young Superintendent of Police. He did not believe that the attempt to gain the money was at an end, and felt sure that another would be made. The house having been so full of guests was probably the reason no further effort had been as yet planned, but as it was almost certain to be watched, it would soon be known that most of the visitors were gone, and, in that case, in all human probability the bushranger would try again that night.

"I will speak to Laura," he thought, as they were all saying good night, "she is a brave girl in spite of her terror last evening, and she can keep counsel."

He crossed the room to where she was standing, and drew her on one side. In a few words he explained the reason of his suspicions, and Laura at once agreed to give all aid in her power.

"It might annoy Mr. Harrington if the subject were, as I fear he would think, unnecessarily brought up at this time of night," she said, "but George, you and I will keep watch. Our rooms are next to one another, so that if I hear any unusual sound, I shall knock loudly, and you will know something is wrong. I shall not tell Agnes, for she is sadly over-worked, and it will only frighten her and not help us in the least. She is not with such kind and thoughtful people as I am," the girl added gratefully. "Was it not good of them to ask her up here, George?"

"It was just like them," Mr. Ackroyd assented warmly,

"but I must not detain you longer, dear. I shall lie down as I am, so that I shall be ready at a moment's notice. Good night, my darling, God keep you in His loving care."

Laura's plan of leaving her sister in ignorance was foiled by the girl herself. She had never been in the country before, and the bushranger's probable vicinity alarmed her greatly. She was far too nervous to think of sleep, and Miss Evesham at last thought it would be best to propose their sitting up together.

"George is on the watch, too, in the next room," she continued, "so do not be so frightened, dear. You might at any rate lie down, I will sit beside you, only we must not talk."

Agnes agreed, and, as her sister had hoped, the rest and quiet prevailed over her nervousness, and she was soon in a dreamless slumber. Finding such was the case, Laura rose and cautiously made her way to the other side of the room, adjoining that of Mr. Ackroyd, seating herself close by the wall, so that she could at once, if necessary, attract his attention. The wall was but of lathe and plaster, so that she was sure of being heard. The bed on which Agnes was sleeping was placed directly under the window, and had only been put in temporarily during the holidays. One stroke sounded from the great clock in the hall, and the girl began to feel cramped and weary, and to wonder if Mr. Harrington was not right in thinking the affair at an end, when her quick ear caught a peculiar sound as though some one were moving stealthily in the room, and the next instant Agnes' voice was heard in terrified accents; "Laura, Laura, take care, some one is standing on the bed!"

Hardly knowing what she was doing, the girl addressed rained a shower of blows against the wall, calling for assistance as she did so. There was a scrambling noise at the window—a shot fired from the next room—and then the door was thrown open and the squatter and his wife, followed by others of the household, entered with lights and hurried enquiries as to the cause of the alarm. They found the two girls crouching together in one corner of the room, dreading they knew not what, and afraid to move for fear of who might have found an entrance through the window. All poor Laura's courage seemed to have gone now the need for her special acting was over, and she broke down com-

pletely as Mrs. Harrington took her in her arms, and soothed her with motherly tenderness.

"Poor child," she said, as she stroked the glossy hair that fell in abundance over the girl's shoulders, having come unfastened in the confusion, "no wonder she has broken down; fancy her sitting up all alone in the darkness listening for that man! It was enough to make her nervous. You and Mr. Ackroyd, after God, have been the means of saving life and property, Laura. We shall never forget how brave you were, my dear," she added as she drew Miss Evesham into her own room, telling Agnes to follow them.

The squatter, George Ackroyd and the other men had meanwhile gone in search of the intruder, and the Police-Superin tendent gave the former an outline of what had occurred since they had said good-night. "Of course it was too dark to see anyone, but like Laura, I heard a movement and could not make out in what direction it was. I feared to show a light, as that would have been a warning some one was awake, and just then, Laura knocked and I heard a noise as though some person were getting out of her window. I fired at once, for my revolver was in my hand, (as it had been indeed the whole time), and rushed into Laura's room to find you and Mrs. Harrington there. I thought I heard a cry as if I had hit some one, but to say the honest truth, I was too anxious about the girls to have much thought for anything else. Have you found any clue, Jack?" he broke off to enquire, as one of the station-hands came running up, and a confused murmur of voices was heard from the lower end of the orangery.

"We have found the bushranger, Mr. Ackroyd," was the reply, "and, Sir," he continued, turning to his master, "I believe it is one of those strange men we noticed at the sale."

"Where is he?" the squatter asked; "is he dead or wounded?"

"Shot in the leg, sir, we tracked him by the blood he had lost."

"Poor wretch," Mr. Harrington said; "this will be your charge, Ackroyd, I suppose, to see him lodged in gaol. Treat him as humanely as you can; he is a fellow-creature in suffering now, whatever his crimes may be."

It had been gradually growing lighter, and by the time they reached the spot where the wounded outlaw lay, the first gleams of the rising sun were touching the dark glossy leaves, and snowy blossoms of the orange-tree beneath which he had fallen. The golden light fell on the wan, drawn face, making it look all the ghastlier for the contrast, and for the moment the two gentlemen thought it was a corpse upon which they were gazing. A few simple remedies were applied, the best that could be devised at the moment, and then the man was placed in a cart, and with George Ackroyd in command of the party, the bushranger was sent off to the gaol in the nearest township. Previous to his departure, Mr. Harrington, who at once knew him for the elder of his two pursuers, enquired if the other man had been concerned in the attempt to rob the house, but the outlaw preserved a sullen silence, or, when forced to reply, did so as guardedly as possible. The squatter, therefore, was left with the uncomfortable feeling that the house was still watched. This, fortunately, proved incorrect, but it was not known at Moolooba, for some days, and it seemed as though the man had purposely left the impression, so as to give his comrades time to escape.

As it was proved to be a clear case of robbery under arms, and that the prisoner was in fact the notorious Wilson, whose deeds of violence had made him dreaded throughout the whole North-eastern district, he was sentenced to death, and before the first quarter of the New Year had passed, the outlaw had paid the penalty of his crime, and gone to answer for all his evil actions to that God Whom in his life he had so outraged and defied.

At the last, he made a full confession. His attention had been drawn by one of the gang (for there were several of them at the sale, watching for opportunities of robbery) to the fact that Mr. Harrington had been a very successful seller that day, and also would go home, unattended, that night with a large sum of money. As the reader is aware, the man yielded to temptation, and set off in pursuit of the squatter. Finding that attempt baffled, he determined to try and enter the house, and on the Wednesday made the effort which had been happily frustrated by Laura Evesham's

ready eye-sight. He, and his companion Bill, lurked about the whole of the next day, keeping well out of sight of the station-hands, and as the evening approached, he concealed himself in the orangery to watch the premises. He saw a number of visitors leave, and judged that the house would therefore be comparatively empty, and after a consultation with Bill, resolved that he would try again that night. He had no idea that anyone was in that special room, for the Eveshams had purposely kept it unlighted, and his consternation was great on hearing Agnes' voice, succeeded by her sister's calls for help. He at once endeavored to escape, and had just sprung out of the window when he was hit by Mr. Ackroyd. He managed to drag himself as far as the orange-tree, but there his strength failed him, and he knew his capture was but a work of time, and that at any moment he was likely to be discovered. He expressed no penitence nor grief for his evil deeds, and died, as he had lived, a hardened, scoffing man.

Mr. Harrington kept to the resolution he had made on seeing how narrowly he had escaped death by the hands of the outlaws, and never again travelled in the reckless way which had so troubled his old friend, Mr. Kelson. Both the latter, and the Harringtons felt that an awful tragedy had, by God's mercy, been averted from Moolooba by the courage and thoughtfulness of George Ackroyd and his future wife, and when the marriage took place a couple of months later, they all showed their remembrance of the fact by many valuable gifts to both the bride and bridegroom.

Agnes Evesham, who, as has been said, was not in strong health at the time of her visit, received so great a shock from the unexpected entrance of the outlaw into the room where she was sleeping, that some weeks elapsed ere she proved well enough to return home, and by that time she was become so great a favourite at Moolooba, that she was easily persuaded to return and take Laura's former position as governess, the more so as her illness compelled the girl to give up the situation she previously held in Melbourne. By Wilson's confession, it was evident she had narrowly escaped with her life, as the man would have fired on hearing her exclamation, but that he was startled by Laura's wild appeal for help, and thought only of making his way back into the garden. Bevis,

as may be imagined, became even more of a favourite than he had been, and the story of his gallant behaviour was told to every visitor at Mooloobà.

Many a happy Christmas and New Year was spent afterwards at the station by those who played their part in this story, and as time went on, and the girls passed into womanhood, the orange-blossoms were once and again gathered for bridal wreaths, but never more were the snowy clusters and glossy leaves found concealing one who, like Wilson, the bushranger, allowed his greed for gold to become in very truth, his own death-warrant.

Work for the Master.

"Open Thou my eyes to see,
All the work Thou hast for me."

IN the following papers I have endeavored to show what a wonderful power God has given to every woman to rightly influence those around them. It is not to every one of us that He sees fit to entrust work that may appear great in the eyes of the world, but there is no woman or girl, whatever may be her position in society who has not received the gift of influence to be used in the Master's Service. Let us take for our motto the lines doubtless familiar to many of my readers:—

"In the service royal,
Let us not grow cold,
Let us be right loyal,
Noble, true and bold."

So may we all hope to do good work for our Master.

ELLEN AUGUSTA CHADS.

WOMAN'S OPPORTUNITIES AND HOME-INFLUENCE.

HOW wide a subject is opened by the above heading. Wide in every sense, The opportunities which lie in our paths of every-day life are very numerous, but only a brief mention of the principal ones can now be enumerated. They may however, serve as reminders to some of those for whose perusal the article is more especially intended.

It may be said by some that their opportunities are so small that they are of little use to those around them, but the Master's own words contradict such an assertion. The "cup of cold water" is as precious in His sight, when given in obedience to and love of Him, as the most costly offering that could be made. And such opportunities lie in all our paths if we will only open our eyes day by day and see them. It is not great deeds that are wanted to make home happy; it is the kindly action, the tender sympathy, the loving look and smile, the warm pressure of the hand, the kiss that tells its own sweet tale of deep affection, that form the sunshine that brightens the family group, even when shadowed by trials and sorrow.

A child's broken toy seems but a trifle to us who have travelled much further on the journey of life than the little one who seeks our aid with tear-dimmed eyes, yet in winning back by gentle words or skilful handiwork the happy smile to

the rosy, quivering lips, we can find an opportunity to do our Master's will. Many a childish tear and sigh may be prevented by a kindly offer of help from one who watches the slow mastery of some rule or lesson. We, who after all, are ourselves but "children of an older growth," too often forget how difficult we once, in long-past years, found just such tasks, and are apt to think the child careless or stupid because it fails to immediately grasp the full meaning set before it. A little patience, a little sympathy, a little trouble to invest the subject with ideas pleasing to a young mind, and the child has conquered its apparently insurmountable difficulty, and the helper has bound another "opportunity" into the golden sheaf of willing offerings to be laid at the Saviour's feet.

The "cup of cold water" can very often be given by a mistress to her servants. The burning question of domestic service is doubtless one that tries both temper and patience, but are our consciences *always* clear in that respect? Do we (I speak now to those who have the charge of a household) always treat them with the consideration that is their due? I do not mean in the way of granting almost unlimited freedom of an evening, and allowing a style of dress unbecoming to their station—the mistress who gives way in these matters is more of an enemy than a friend to her servant—but do we, as a rule, show a girl that we have her best interests at heart? Do we take a kindly sympathy in her joys and sorrows—in the welfare of those who should be nearest and dearest to her? Do we, above all, seek to guide her steps to the feet of Him Who died that she might live, and set her such an example in our daily life as to help her on in her upward path? If we *do not* act in such a way, we are losing many an opportunity for good, and failing in our duty to that member of our household who is, perhaps more than any other one of it, exposed to dangers and temptations. One of the most frequent remarks in these days is, "it is so difficult to find a good servant," and whilst freely admitting the general incompetency of very many who offer themselves in that capacity, it may still be asked, "Is the influence of the mistress always exerted in the wisest way to benefit her servant"? Let me quote a few words on the subject, taken from "Work in Brighton," by Ellice Hopkins:—

"Does not our religious and our family-life, in a measure, flow on apart from our servants? Do we know all about them, taking a personal interest in their concerns and sympathising with their joys and sorrows? It is surely more than *human* relationships which are wanted between our servants and us to guard them? Let us remember that the life of a general servant is essentially monotonous, that young girls, all the world over, want a little fun, and let us contrive for them, as we do for our own children, pleasant little breaks from time to time in the daily routine. The supply of wholesome literature is very necessary, and when all this thoughtful love and care is shown, we can set our faces against the "evening out," unless it be for a definite engagement, and give an afternoon instead, pointing out that we would not let one of our own daughters go drifting about the streets alone at night."

If women would but use their influence in the way just pointed out, domestic service would take a higher stand, and the factories would no longer offer girls superior inducements which, alas! but too often only prove the stepping-stones to their ruin.

I cannot, in a paper of this length, do more than merely glance at the opportunities that lie in the path of a wife, or the numerous ways in which her influence may be exerted. Surely some of the sweetest she can ever hope to find are those which bring a smile to, and a blessing from, the lips of the husband, weary with brain or hand-work and, it may be, bowed down by the anxiety of the busy daily life and the difficulties that arise through poverty and sickness. And when the heart is sore with griefs to which the world is a stranger, whose voice should be so dear, whose counsel so precious, as that of a true and loving wife, for her influence can then be so exerted as to lift the dark cloud of threatened difficulty, and show the "silver lining" made apparent by her magic touch.

It is useless to deny that there are cruel and neglectful husbands in the world, but it is equally true that there would be far more happy homes if women only used their God-given power of influence in the right direction. Without entering into the vexed question of the woman's rights and suffrage move-

ment, it can hardly be denied that if its advocates are granted all they desire, the generality of homes will not be thereby increased in comfort. No woman continually attending political meetings or occupied with the affairs of the State, can give her own home the thought and care it demands, and, as a natural result, her husband and children must be neglected and their rightful claims upon her time sacrificed, to allow of her occupying a position which God never intended her to fill. It is strange that whilst "Woman's rights and Woman's mission" are subjects so frequently discussed in these days by our own sex, many of whom are such firm advocates of the society upholding the suffrage question, and whilst so much is written upon these topics, that the one great power which we all possess and by the use of which such mighty results might be gained—I mean that of influence—is but seldom pressed upon the attention of those around us who are daily entering on the various duties that arise as childhood is left behind them. To make home sweet and fair by every means in her power, to let her husband realize in very truth that she is his "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness, and in health, so long as they both shall live," and to aid him by her unfaltering affection and trust to look up with happy faith to their Heavenly Father for help and guidance, are but a few of the "drops" in the cup of cold water which a loving wife can offer to the one who is the dearest and nearest to her in this world. And oh! let such remember how short may be the time in which such blessed opportunities are given them—how suddenly the dark shadow of the wings of the last messenger of God may rest on the once happy home, and all joy and sunshine seem, so far as this world's happiness is concerned, for ever gone, and the cry of the sorrowful, aching heart be for "the touch of a vanished hand, the sound of a voice that is still." Let them remember *this*, and on bended knees and with hearts filled with joy and gratitude, render thanks and adoration to the Master who still gives them such unutterably happy life-work.

Take again the "home-sunshine" that is the out-come of the sweet and gentle influence exercised by the eldest daughter of a large family. How fondly the eyes of the watchful mother rest upon her as she soothes the rising anger

of some school-boy brother, and coaxes away the noisy little ones that quiet may relieve the aching head of the parent whom she loves so well. How lovingly the father's hand is laid on her shoulder as he bends to kiss the bright face that always greets him with a smile, aud listens to the glad welcome that tells him it is truly "home" which he has entered. Do girls, I wonder, ever realize what it is for a father, tired and worn with a long day's work, (be it of brain or hand) to see on his return home only cross or worried faces, and to hear complaints of "everything being so dull."? Is it any wonder if such a reception provokes a somewhat stern rejoinder, or that the evening which might have been so bright and happy, often proves the very reverse? Who is the most to blame in such a case? The bread-winner, who has been toiling all the day in behalf of those belonging to him, or the girl who has wilfully neglected to rightly employ the mission committed to her charge—the "home-sunshine of her influence"? And yet more grievous is the effect upon those loving, gentle natures who feel the unkindness of such a greeting all the more that no word of reproach ever passes their lips. There is no outward sign, perhaps, but the grief abides, an ever-present shadow on life's path. Woe to those who cast in a tender and loving father's way, trials and sorrows, caused by their own ingratitude and waywardness! What will be their plea when the Master calls them to account for their words and actions?

The opportunities and influence of a sister should never be forgotten. How many a brother can look back to some time in his past life when the latter was used by God as the instrument for withholding him from the abyss into which his besetting sin was leading him, and thankfully acknowledge that it was indeed the "golden chain" that led him back to the path of duty.

The numerous acts of friendship from one neighbor to another, are all "opportunity drops" that go to fill up that "cup" which the Master has promised shall meet with its own reward. It is in times of sickness and sorrow that such are specially welcome, cheering the sad hearts that are well-nigh fainting beneath their heavy trials. A visit from one who has a bright yet gentle manner, is often of great

advantage to an invalid, turning the mind from the contemplation of its own surroundings to the brighter interests of the outside world, and thereby lessening the danger that sometimes exists, more or less, of a sick person becoming somewhat selfish and absorbed in his or her own personal sufferings and wants. A gift of flowers is always of use in an invalid's room, not only from the beneficial effect of their own sweet presence, but because they preach so eloquent though silent a sermon, raising the thoughts of those who look at them to Him who made the fair blossoms and exquisite foliage, and opening a way for the reading of the Bible, the repeating of some suitable verses, or a few kindly words of comfort and prayer.

There is great happiness for those who are laid aside from active life in the remembrance that many a golden opportunity is to be found even when lying on their couch of pain and weakness. Like the flowers, those fair "stars of Earth," they too can teach silent lessons. In bearing witness for the Master Whose loving hand has seen fit to lay them low, by patience in suffering, by striving to be sunbeams instead of shadows in the home-circle, by gentle words, and by seeking in every way to take up their cross bravely for the Saviour's sake, they can "work a work" that will certainly gain the blessed reward of His approving smile and loving praise, "Well-done, good and faithful servants."

Look too at the marvellous power of influence that belongs to a mother. From the time when her child lies a helpless infant in her tender arms until the hour in which she hears the Divine call "Come up hither," a Christian mother's influence makes itself felt, in a greater or less degree, amongst her family. Years may pass on, and the "son of her love" become more of a sorrow than a joy to her, but the magic chain that memory weaves around him of that mother's prayers and life still holds him back from plunging deeper into sin, and is, perhaps, the only link that yet binds him to that "home-sunshine" he once so greatly loved and valued. Oh mothers, to whom the Master has committed one of the most sacred and responsible of all trusts, let no allurements of society tempt you to be careless as to your power of influencing your children. Let it be from your lips that the little ones shall first learn of a Saviour's love; let it be to your

sympathy they shall turn in all their childish grief, and as they pass on to girlhood and manhood, and new duties and affections come to them, let them ever find in your tender mother's heart a refuge where they can lay down their perplexities and cares, as well as whisper of their newly-found joys. Let your influence too be used in making a bright and happy home. Pleasure is a necessity of healthy youth, and the young look for it as flowers crave for light and air. Give them all the enjoyment that you can, only see to it that the pleasures are innocent ones, and teach them to acknowledge a Father's hand in all.

Every woman's existence is made sweeter and richer for gathering up and employing the means of usefulness that lie in her path. There is an old saying that "man's extremity is God's opportunity." May it not be that in placing in our way opportunities of various kinds, the Master is honouring us by giving each a share in His own work? Such a thought should rouse us up to labour with all our power "whilst it is called to-day."

In conclusion, I would ask my readers, whether wives, mothers, mistresses of households, daughters or sisters, to think seriously on the "mission" committed to their charge, and to remember that the sphere of their influence is not limited to the home of which it should be the "sunshine," but that, like the rippling circles which spread away from the stone thrown into the lake, it extends far beyond our ken, and often exerts a power of which we ourselves may remain perfectly unconscious until that day when all shall be made clear in "perfect light."

Let us then, each in our own sphere, so seek to live that our influence may be one for good, and not for evil, and determine, by the Master's help, to work steadfastly for Him alone, making such good use of the opportunities He will most surely give us, that in the last Great Day we shall none of us have to answer for leaving them unheeded or unused.

ON THE VALUE OF TIME.

(A PAPER FOR GIRLS.)

MOST of us have heard the sentence, "I have nothing to do," fall from the lips of the young, and watched with sorrowful gaze, the listless movements, the weary, even discontented expression, that marred the fresh beauty of the girlish face that was so dear to us either by relationship or the ties of amity. Looking at all the surroundings of the pleasant home—the loving parents, the happy family-circle, the numerous friends, and the many enjoyments of health, amusements suitable to their age, and freėdom from poverty—the thought cannot but present itself that something is wrong beneath that seeming happiness, something wanting in the armour with which every parent should seek to secure a child against the temptations that must assail it as it travels along the path of life.

In almost every case where the above quoted words are constantly upon the lips of any girl, it will be found that she has never been taught to know how rightly to occupy her time, and hence it is that, with no true estimate of the value of the gift bestowed upon her, she unconsciously drifts into an aimless, useless existence, vainly striving to fill up the weary hours with every new craze of "art-needlework," or perhaps entering eagerly into the vortex of feverish amusements that pass, in what is termed "society," as real pleasure and intellectual recreation.

The girl is not to be blamed; she knows no better as she emerges from the general run of school-life, and if no guiding hand is held out to her, and her feet are not firmly resting upon the Rock of Ages, what is more likely than that she should be fascinated by the glittering charms of the world, with its mani-

fold attractions for the young heart that is too full of light-hearted gaiety to be able to discern that the wreaths of roses held out for acceptance but too often simply hide the iron chains in which sin binds its unwary captives? The blame rests upon the parents, or those who hold to her that most precious and responsible position.

From the period that a child is old enough to occupy itself in any rational manner, it should be taught that time is a sacred gift from God Himself, and that to waste it is as wrong in His eyes as to do so in regard to anything they can see or touch. The lesson once learnt and thoroughly understood would never be forgotten, and the good fruits would be seen as the child passed on into girlhood. Instead of a listless, discontented manner, with no ambition beyond excelling in lawn-tennis or fancy-work, with an unhealthy love for novels, theatres and balls, in which she might distance, (as regards the latter) some girlish rival in the matter of dress, there would be found a frank, earnest nature bright with the joy of vigorous youth, filled with love to the God whom she had been taught to obey from childhood, and finding every hour full of interest because the time was rightly occupied. Would not such a result be worth the years of anxious care and thought, the daily prayers of any parent? And yet, alas! looking round on the younger members of many a family in our midst, it seems as though such a course had been either never thought of, or, if contemplated, given up, as too wearisome and difficult a task. Is it any wonder that children grow up frivolous, and with their thoughts more occupied with dress and the time when they shall be "out" in society, when they are left, as is too often the case, almost wholly in the charge of some uneducated nurse, and allowed to accept the now unfortunately frequent invitations to so-called "children's parties," but which, in sad truth, are but miniature imitations of grown-up balls? What can be imagined more fatally pernicious to the beautiful innocence of real childhood than such events? Who can picture to themselves over-excited, tired children kneeling with clasped hands at a parent's knee, and asking from sweet, fresh lips that the loving care of the Saviour might rest upon them through the hours of hoped-for sleep and quiet? Or who can *not* imagine the vanity and unkindness that would be apparent in the remarks of some

little one as it talked about the scene of fairy-land that had so naturally charmed its wondering gaze? Truly a solemn responsibility rests now, more perhaps than it has ever yet done, on those to whom the Master has entrusted the sacred charge of bringing up children.

But perhaps some young reader may ask "How shall I spend my time"? Christ has said, 'Occupy till I come,' therefore the answer is an easy one to give—your time must be passed in such a manner that you would not fear to listen to the words, "The Master calleth thee."

There are many ways in which a girl can so spend her days as to be full of interest to herself, and yet make her a "home-sunbeam" at the same time. There is sometimes a danger that a girl may, in her wish to spend a useful life, look too far off. "The thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts," and in looking so far ahead, she cannot see the little duties lying in her path, and in the performance of which is her best training for great and worthy deeds, should it please God to entrust such to her.

First and foremost amongst the sweet home-duties of girlhood is that of helping a mother, and, by so doing, sending extra sunshine into a father's life. To a weary mother such aid as that given by an elder daughter is almost invaluable, whether it be by taking from her the cares of house-keeping, the looking-after or the instruction of the children. The tired brain and aching fingers have time to rest, and the heart is strengthened and nerved for further effort by the loving care and winning ways of the child who is now so richly repaying her for former devotion, and in those duties, irksome as they may perhaps seem at first, the girl herself will find a full reward. The sweet smile and tender thanks of her mother, the approving glance of her father, the merry voices of the little ones as they gather around her for work or play, all will be happiness to her, and enable her to turn with a clear conscience and glad spirit to other employments and amusements more especially her own. These latter embrace a variety of occupations. Music, singing and painting, all rank high in the list, and they have the advantage, moreover, of giving pleasure to many, besides the artist or musician herself.

To one really fond of such work and having special talent

for it, there is, however, one danger against which she must guard—the so devoting her time to it as to selfishly curtail that portion which should be given to others. Here, as in many another case, the prayer is needed, "Lead us not into temptation."

Reading, when rightly directed, is both a profitable and delightful way of filling up an hour or so a day, and needlework is another source of enjoyment that will prove equally useful to herself and those around her.

In writing of "art-needlework," as was done in the beginning of this paper, there was no intention to decry it. Many beautiful gifts for home and friends can be done by girls with clever fingers. It is the *abuse* of time too often involved in that pursuit that is to be condemned, and the same can be said of lawn-tennis and similar amusements. Youth and pleasure are as inseparable, thank God, as day and sunlight, but a due discretion in the one is only wise, whilst that alone should be indulged in, on which the Master's smile and blessing could rest. There are few pleasanter sights than a group of happy girls, and genuine enjoyment of the right class of amusements will but make them turn with the greater zeal to those duties, the fulfilment of which form "home-sunbeams."

And, lastly, there is one more way of occupying time which must never be forgotten if the girl wishes the remainder of it to be of effectual use to herself or others—I mean prayer, and the reading with meditation of God's word. The morning and evening hour should, if possible, be so occupied, ushering in and closing the day by self-consecration to Him in Whom alone rests our hope of eternal life. Then indeed she may lie down at night to rest and go forth in the pleasant morning with a well-founded hope that the coming hours will be rightly occupied, and that her influence (that wonderful power we all possess, and yet so frequently forget to employ for good) will be felt throughout the family-circle like the gentle breath of spring which cheers and revives all over which it passes, leaving as a token of its sweet presence, a beauty and a freshness that rejoice all hearts.

And such a sunbeam may be every girl who has been taught how to rightly occupy, and know the value of, time.

ON INDIVIDUAL WORK.

"DAUGHTERS OF THE KING."

SUCH is the title of a society founded some years ago in New-York by several ladies who wished to do the Master's work in an organised way, yet untrammelled by wearisome Committee rules and regulations. It began with only ten members, but is now a large Association, doing good in many varied forms It is not my intention to enter into a description of their work, but simply to dwell for a short time upon the thoughts arising from the contemplation of the name chosen by them, and the many duties and privileges belonging to the same.

"Daughters of the King"! A noble title truly, and one that belongs as entirely to the poorest and most ignorant woman as to the Queen herself, but also one that has solemn responsibilities attached to it. Those who confess themselves to be such must indeed be "all glorious within," for "the King greatly desires their beauty."

"What is this glory—this beauty"? my readers may ask.

It is the glory of a soul cleansed by the Master's atoning blood—the beauty of a life wholly consecrated to His service in thought and word and deed.

Not one of the least important of the duties appertaining to this high position is *consistency*. It may be, and doubtless often is, a difficult task to be a consistent Christian, but if we would be worthy daughters of the King, our lives must be in daily accordance with our profession. The "armour" given us by Him must be carefully examined day by day, for the enemy is on the alert to take advantage of the most

trivial weak spot, and it is incumbent on us to lay to heart the royal command—"Watch." It is of but comparatively little use for us to speak eloquently to others, and plead with them to flee to the "Eternal Refuge" "whilst it is yet day," if we ourselves do not live such lives that "he who runs may read" in them, as in an open book, the blessed truth that Christ is to us an ever-present Saviour, and that we are striving to walk as He would have us to do. Let us seek, unassumingly and quietly, to set the example of a godly, consistent life, letting it be plainly seen that even in the veriest trifles we do not forget Whose "daughters" we are, and that we bear a title too precious to be dimmed by neglect or carelessness on our part.

Another duty is to see that our influence be thrown on the right side. Perhaps no power that women possess is so great as influence, and therefore our responsibility in that respect becomes all the more solemn when we claim the title of "Daughters of the King." The influence a wife, a mother and a sister can exercise upon those nearest and dearest to them, has been mentioned in a previous article referring to that subject, but the power can extend into the outer world also, and every woman, married or single, should exert it wherever she can. It is a blessed gift that we possess; but do we not too often, like the unfaithful servant in the parable, hide that God-given "talent" in the earth, by allowing our influence to lie dormant instead of using it for the glory of our King and Master, and the good of those around us? Can any one of us—even the most zealous—say honestly, "I have done what I could"?

Perhaps one of my readers may say, "I am willing to exert my influence, but it is not sufficiently great to be of any value."

Do not listen to such specious pleading of the enemy of your King and your own soul. No human creature is without influence, whether exerted for evil or for good. You may not possess wealth, the Master may have seen fit that you should not be specially endowed in the way of beauty, intellect or position, but He has not left you without the power of influencing those who come within your sphere. Each day will bring its "golden opportunity," never to be

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recalled if you omit to seize it when offered to your acceptance. It may be but the soothing of some childish sorrow or fit of anger—perhaps but the speaking of a kindly word to the beggar who seeks your aid—but it has left its mark for all eternity, and, for aught you know, has sown seed whose fruits shall be only seen by you on that day "when all things shall be made clear."

But whilst the value of good influence is so great and unending, we should not forget that that of the opposite tendency is just as pot·nt. A servant who knows that her mistress professes Christianity, finds the latter unjust or hasty of temper, and, if she herself be unconverted, straightway denounces such profession as "hypocrisy." The mistress' influence has been thrown (thoughtlessly, no doubt, but no less injuriously) into the wrong balance, and harm has been done that may spread far beyond her control or knowledge.

A remark—half-censure, half-jest—has been made before a child about someone whom he knows, and the seeds of ill-will or contempt are sown in his heart, and will, sooner or later, bring forth its own evil crop of unkind words or actions. None can tell how terrible will be the harvest of bad influence, but every woman can pray that the power given unto her shall only be employed to redound to the glory of the King who honors *her* with the name of "daughter."

Self must be wholly put on one side if we are really to be "daughters" of Him Who gave His life to redeem ours. Many a battle will have to be fought, many a conflict endured, and the spirit will be faint and weary with the temptations and devices of the enemy of our souls, but we must still strive on, and if unable to do more than *little* acts of self-denial, must remember the Master's gracious words that even a "cup of cold water" is acceptable in His sight if given with the right motive.

There are numerous ways in which self can be crucified, of which none but the King and ourselves may be aware. Many a remark might be made more witty by the addition of another word or so, but the point gained by the sentence could be only obtained at the expense of some one absent or present, and is best left unsaid, even though it detract from

the so-called "clever hit." A friendly call on some tired "house-mother," a patient listening to the enumeration of the cares that seem weighing her down, a kindly offer to "do something" whilst hearing them, a few bright, hopeful words pointing her to Him Who is ever saying, "I will give you rest," may seem but a wearisome exchange for an hour's reading of some pleasant book or other agreable amusement, but those who bear the title, "Daughters of the King," must, to be so in reality, be true followers of the Saviour Who "came not to *be ministered unto, but to minister to others.*"

The present age is essentially one of societies and associations, and much honest, true work is done by their members for the Master and His Kingdom, but there is a danger, (and one that seems growing daily stronger) that the subscribers to such, rest a good deal on that fact, and seem to consider that having paid down a certain amount, they have done all that can be required of them. The subscriptions, if given in the right spirit, are of course, looked upon, and accepted by the Master, as work done for Him, but should the efforts in His cause end with a cheque, however large? It is individual labor God requires as well, and there are so many channels open to us all in the world. It may be pleaded that ill-health may prevent many from taking advantage of such means, but if the Master sees fit to close one avenue, He most surely sets another wide open. The invalid can do as earnest, soul-saving work as the greatest preacher or missionary, for as one of the "praying-band," her petitions may rise on behalf of those who need help, spiritual or temporal. The hands, weakened by pain, may yet at times gain strength enough to do a little needlework which will be gladly welcomed in many a home where poverty is a too well-known guest, or write loving letters, pointing the readers to Him Who ever waits with out-stretched hands to welcome the sinner. Even if unable to do so much as this, messages may be sent, bidding the weary and sorrowful rejoice in the blessed knowledge that Christ is their Lord and Saviour. A sick-bed may bring forth valuable work for Jesus, if the one who lies on it be indeed a "daughter of the King." And for those who are strong and well, the paths of personal labour are almost numberless, and who can estimate the good done by those

who quietly follow in them? It is right and well to belong to mothers' meetings, sewing-parties and all the numerous Church-organizations, but in the multiplicity of these engagements, is it not too often the case that little simple, every-day kindnesses (that yet mean so much to the recipient) are overlooked? Overlooked from sheer thoughtlessness, not unkindness. How often is the remark heard, "I have attended regularly for months at that church, but not one of the congregation has ever called upon me. A few speak kindly as I leave my pew, but to all intents and purposes, I am as great a stranger there as the first day I attended. A little interest or sympathy expressed in my affairs, or even a visit paid now and then, would have been so pleasant, but no one has thought of it."

Would not that longed-for "sympathy," that "little interest," have been as true "work" in the Master's eyes as any of the numerous meetings, or concerts for the benefit of Sunday-school and choir?

Again, to one loving flowers, and whose means are too limited to allow of many purchases in that line, how welcome would the gift be of pretty bulbs and slips to brighten up the little garden whose culture is perhaps one of the few bright spots in the shadowed life. And how gracefully it might be conveyed! "Our garden was looking so lovely last summer with these," showing the collection, "that I thought you might like to try a few this year in your beds. I know how fond you are of flowers." A speech of that kind takes away any sense of patronage, leaving only that of a fellow-feeling in the love of gardening and of kindly interest in the one to whom it is offered.

"Such little things! Not worth naming as work for the Master," some of my readers may say. And yet life is made up of "little things," and Christ Himself did not disdain to remember how much they sweeten an action. Do you think it was unintentional that when the Lord raised the son of the widow at Nain, "He delivered him to his *mother*"? Many might have considered that the mere fact of the young man being brought back from the dead, the seeing him once again in life and strength, would have been joy enough for the mother's heart, but the Master knew that He could make

that happiness even greater, and so He allowed *her* hands to be the first to touch her recovered treasure, *her* arms to enfold him, *her* lips to press the kiss of love on his. Or when he cleansed the leper, could He not have wrought the cure by a word? But the loving Saviour "put forth His hand and *touched* him." Think what it must have meant—that merciful, sympathising touch—to the one who had been forced to live apart from all dear to him, and to flee from the very face of men! Do you imagine there was no special motive of mercy in that seemingly slight act? Ah, believe me, Christ set us the example of sympathy to one another, and we cannot do true work for Him without it, whether that work be great or small.

Another danger against which we must guard, is that of letting all these numerous duties so engross us, that we allow our home ones to be neglected, or only partially fulfilled. I am, of course, now addressing myself to those to whom God has granted such sweet blessings as a home, and the precious work appertaining to it. Until those duties have been done, no woman has a right to look around for other work for the Master, or, should she undertake it, to expect His blessing on her efforts.

I remember standing once with a girl beside her mother's coffin, and as she gazed on the peaceful face, I heard words spoken, as to herself, that told me remorse was adding its pangs to natural sorrow. And great pity filled my heart, for I knew how often she had let slip opportunities of brightening the lot of the patient invalid who had been so tender a parent to her. The girl was quoted as an example of good works by the members of the church to which she belonged, but I, who had been intimate with the family for years, knew that the request to stay and read aloud, or sit beside that mother's bedside to wile away the long, weary hours of illness, had but too often been met by the plea that she had engagements belonging to the various Church organisations, and that she *must* go to them. The different offices she had undertaken were good and laudable in themselves, but she had gone out of her appointed path of duty to find them, neglecting her daily God-given ones, and refusing, in her wilful blindness, to see her fault until brought face to face with it as she looked on that dead mother.

God does not force us to *search* for the work He requires of us. It lies before us, plainly to be seen, but too often we disregard it for some special aim on which we have set our hearts, and which we would fain believe was the real mission entrusted to our care. But all in vain is the attempt to carry it out. The Psalmist long ago warned those who strove to work in their own way, not as God would have it done.

"Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." And it is the same to-day. If the Master's blessing and approval do not rest upon us, we too are "spending our strength for naught."

As "Daughters of the King," we must be very careful of the *example* we set to others, and good work can be done in this way by steadfastly setting our faces against the bad habit of gossiping about friends and neighbors. It may not be always possible or courteous to do so by words, but we can all show our dislike to it by not joining in the remarks, or by making an opportunity to quit the company indulging in it. The sword of venom carried by gossip is two-edged, for it injures both the speaker and the person to whom allusion is made. A habit of constantly holding up for remark the sayings and doings of other people must, in time, have an ill-effect upon the minds of those who conform to it, and unfit them for conversation of a higher and nobler stamp.

And lastly, there is very solemn work for each one of us, who calls herself a "daughter" of our God and King, and that is, to make such daily preparation that when the last message comes to us with the royal command, "Be ye ready," we may be enabled so to receive it that our Sovereign-Lord may be glorified, and the Bible proved true in our last hours. Even should illness cloud our thoughts and prevent our speaking of the Master's loving atonement, our deaths may not be without fruit to His glory if the bystanders can recall lives of faith, and hope, and patient, loving work for Him in Whom was all our trust for time and for eternity.

Death should have no terrors for us if we are in very truth, "daughters of the King." What is there to fear in the call to a Kingdom and a crown, and better—sweeter still—to the

"kept place" in our Father's home? To those who love Jesus, there can be no dread, no fear. Truly did the poet write, "There is no death, what seems so is transition," for the Master's "Come up hither," is but the lifting to a higher, purer state of life, where sorrow and parting are unknown, and "where the inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick."

Not for us who will be so called will there be any sorrow; the battle will have been fought, the victory gained through Christ, and the King Himself will welcome us home. The grief and pain will be for those still left in the midst of the noise and conflict of battle, and who will sorely miss the ones so long fighting by their side. Shall we not try and make the last memories they have of us sweet and strengthening ones? Memories that shall make them too, eager to be "daughters of the King," and brave workers for the Master? Memories that shall spur them on, by God's help, to wage unceasing war with sin, to go forth seeking to lessen the pain and sorrow ever present in this fair world, to carry sympathy and joy wherever needed, and so to live that they, in their turn, when called to the "house not made with hands," may leave memories behind that shall bring honor to their King?

God grant that we may all, both in our lives and in our deaths, show to Whom we belong, and whilst we are still spared to work for Him, determine that every power of mind and body shall be consecrated to His service "Who died that we might live."

Space will not allow of further duties being named, but sufficient have perhaps been mentioned to induce my readers to think out others for themselves, and resolve that they too will become part of that royal family whose members are of all nations and all classes, and who yet are bound in one golden chain, the links of which are forged by eternal love and cemented with the atoning blood of that Lord and Saviour, by Whom alone we dare to claim the right of calling ourselves, "Daughters of the King."

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